

THE
WORKS

OF THE

RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD

WILLIAM BEVERIDGE, D. D.

LORD BISHOP OF ST. ASAPH.

THE
WORKS
OF THE
RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD
WILLIAM BEVERIDGE, D. D.
LORD BISHOP OF ST. ASAPH.
CONTAINING ALL HIS
SERMONS,
AS WELL THOSE PUBLISHED BY HIMSELF, AS THOSE SINCE HIS DEATH.
WITH A PREFACE,
Giving some account of the Author and his Writings;
A TABLE OF THE TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE
OCCASIONALLY EXPLAINED;
AND AN
Alphabetical Index
TO THE WHOLE.

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SERMON XXIV.

THE OBLIGATIONS OF SUPERIORS TO PROMOTE RELIGION.

PSAL. ii. 11

Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

ALTHOUGH these words were spoken by David, king of Israel, yet they were not his words, but the word of God himself; as the same royal prophet saith, in his last prophetic words, *The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue*, 2 Sam. xxiii. 2. So it was in his composing and uttering this psalm; he did it not out of his own head, but as he *was moved by the Holy Ghost*: so that it was God himself that spake it by him. This we cannot doubt of, having it so plainly attested from heaven; for when St. Peter and St. John had told the rest of the apostles and disciples how they had been threatened by the rulers of the Jews for preaching the Gospel of Christ, *they lift up their voice with one accord unto God, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that therein is: who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered to-*

gether, &c. Acts iv. 24, 25, 26, 27 And they had no sooner said this, and prayed for grace to preach the word with boldness, but immediately the *place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness*, ver. 31. The shaking of the house, and the coming of the Holy Ghost upon them at that time, being wholly out of the ordinary course of nature, could not have happened but by the immediate hand of God; who therefore did, by this means, set, as it were, his seal, for the confirmation of all that his apostles had then said. But they had said, what he himself had said *by the mouth of his servant David, Why do the heathen rage, &c.* Which being the very words wherewith this psalm begins, God did thereby own himself to be the author of it, and affirmed it by a miracle; which is more, I think, than can be said of any other particular place of Scripture, after the whole had been so confirmed.

Neither did he, in this extraordinary manner, signify his approbation only of what they had then said concerning this psalm in general, but likewise of what they added for the explication of it; even that *his holy child Jesus*, whom he had anointed, was the Messiah or Christ here spoken of; and that the whole psalm is therefore to be understood of him, and of him only: that it was he against whom the people raged; that he is that Lord, who, sitting in heaven, will *have them in derision, and vex them in his sore displeasure* for it, ver. 1, 3, 4. That it is he of whom God the Father saith, *Yet have I set my king*, a king of mine own anointing, *upon my holy hill of Sion*, ver. 5. (where the ark then was, and he sat between the cherubims over the mercy-seat that was upon it:) and that it was he who said, *I will declare the decree, The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession:*

thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel, ver. 7, 8, 9.

The Spirit of Christ being in all the prophets, 1 Pet. i. 11 particularly in this, Christ often speaks of himself in the first person so plainly, that it cannot possibly be understood of any other : as where he saith, *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell*, Psal. xvi. 10. *They pierced my hands and my feet*, Psal. xxii. 16. *They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture*, ver. 18. So here he saith, *I will declare the decree, The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* Whereby he hath declared to the world his eternal Godhead : that he was from all eternity begotten of Jehovah the Father, and therefore must needs be of the same divine nature with him, the same Jehovah ; it being impossible there should be any more than one Jehovah, Deut. vi. 4. according to his own saying, *I and the Father are one*, John x. 30. This he declares in the first place, as being the foundation of that religion that he hath revealed to the world, and of all our hopes of salvation in it. And therefore also in the New Testament this declaration is frequently quoted, always applied to Christ, and great use is made of it, for the confirming of his religion, Heb. i. 5. v. 5. and Acts xiii. 33. where it is expressly said to be written in the second psalm : which is another undeniable argument, that this psalm is to be understood wholly of Christ Jesus.

Having thus declared his eternal generation, as he was God, he then sets forth the great power that is given him, as he is the King before spoken of, set upon Sion, as he is the head of the church, the Saviour of the world, the Mediator between God and men ; for it is only as he is such, that any thing can be given him which he had not before : but as he had undertaken to be born of the seed of the woman, and was so in the decree and promise of God from the beginning of the world, and was therefore anointed to be a Prophet, a

Priest, and a King too, that he might be able to destroy the works of the devil, and to save mankind ; in this respect he there declares, that the Lord hath also said unto him, *Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession.* Though he was then set upon *the holy hill of Sion*, (which was therefore holy because he kept his residence there ;) yet his dominion was to be *from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth*, Psal. lxxii. 8. so that *all kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him*, ver. 11. King David himself calls him *his Lord*, Psal. cx. 1. and *the Lord of the whole earth*, Psal. xcvi. 6. which title can belong to none but Christ, and to him only as he is God-man, and as such the Saviour of all mankind : for no mere man ever was, nor can be *Lord of the whole earth*. God, as such, is the Lord not only of the earth, but of the whole world. But Christ, as he is the Son of man, as well as the Son of God, hath the whole earth in his own possession, and all the nations and people in it subject to his dominion and power. This is here said to be given him by Jehovah, the *Lord of heaven and earth* : and it is given him on purpose that he may save all that believe in him, and serve him, in whatsoever part of the earth they live. Thus he himself explains this gift of the Father to him, saying unto him, *Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee : as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him*, John xvii. 1, 2. Hence it is that he commanded his apostles to go and *make all nations his disciples, by baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, Matt. xxviii. 19. that so all nations, and all the people in them, both old and young, might *be brought into subjection to him, and become his inheritance*, as it is here promised. And accordingly at the very time that he ascended up to heaven, he promised his apostles, that they should receive

power from him to preach his Gospel, and so *be witnesses to him, not only in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, but unto the utmost parts of the earth*, Acts i. 8. and that he himself would be with them and their successors in doing it *to the end of the world*, Matt. xxviii. 20. By which means many of *all nations, kindreds, people, and tongues* upon earth are advanced to heaven, Rev. vii. 9. by his almighty power, who reigns and rules over the whole earth : but for that purpose he asketh it of the Father, who said to him, *Ask of me, and I will give thee*, &c. that is, he prays or intercedes for *all that come unto God by him*, wheresoever they live, and therefore is *able to save them all to the uttermost*, how many soever they be, and will accordingly do it, Heb. vii. 25.

Such a mighty prince is the Lord Jesus, *the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords*, 1 Tim. vi. 15 presiding over all the empires and kingdoms upon earth, and ordering all things in them, so as may conduce to his glory, and to the salvation of all that take his yoke upon them, believe in him, and keep his laws ; and that nothing may be able to impede his saving of them, he hath all power given him, not only upon earth, but in heaven too, Matt. xxviii. 18. For God hath now *set him at his own right hand, far above all principalities, and powers, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come ; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body*, Eph. i. 20, 21, 22, 23. So that he is now Lord paramount over the whole creation, and all for the sake of his church, or the congregation of faithful people dispersed over the face of the earth, that he may bring them at last to reign with him in heaven. But as for such as will not believe in him, but rebel against him, and refuse to submit to his laws and government, *he will break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a*

potter's vessel, ver. 9. as many have found already by woful experience, and all shall do so at the last day; when he shall come again, and manifest his supreme authority over the whole earth, by judging all mankind that ever did or ever shall live upon the face of it.

Now God our Saviour having thus asserted his divine glory and power in the former part of this psalm, all the rest of it is only a conclusion that naturally follows upon these premises: for these things being considered, the Holy Spirit in David infers, *be wise now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth*, ver. 10. that is, learn from hence and beware, that you set yourselves no more against the Lord, and against his Christ: but *serve the Lord*, this mighty Lord, *serve him with fear*, dreading the thoughts of ever falling under his displeasure; and *rejoice with trembling*, rejoice that ye have such an almighty King and Saviour; but to do it with fear and reverence of his divine majesty and power. *Kiss the Son*, 1 Kings xix. 18. adore this the eternal Son of God, the Lord of the whole earth, lest he *be angry* with you for not paying the homage which you owe him, and so you *perish* in the way, in the way you are going to the other world, and be there *punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*, 2 Thess. i. 9. as you most certainly will, if his anger *be kindled*, yea *but a little*, against you. But blessed, thrice *blessed are all they that put their trust* and believe *in him*: he will pray for them, though not for the rest of the world, and so will take them into his own almighty protection; make *all things work together for their good*, while they are upon earth, and then bring them to himself in heaven, where they shall *behold his glory, and enjoy him for ever*.

It was necessary thus to run through this whole psalm, the better to clear the way to that part of it which I design, God willing, to insist more particularly upon, even *serve the Lord with fear*: which otherwise might not

have been so well understood, whereas now it is plain and easy. For seeing that Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, is spoken of, as I have shewn in the former part of this psalm, and his dominion is there asserted over all the earth, the conclusion drawn from these premises must be understood of the same person: and therefore by the Lord, whom kings and judges are here commanded to serve, we must understand the Lord Christ, the Son, as he is here also expressly called, even the eternal Son of God the Father. Not that the Father also is not to be served, but because, as the Son himself saith, *the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*, John v. 23. This was the great end wherefore the Father hath committed so great authority over all the earth to the Son, that all mankind should serve and honour him, in all respects, as they do or ought to honour and serve the Father: for they are both one Jehovah, one God; and therefore whatsoever is done to the one, is done to the other; *He that believeth on me*, saith the Son, *believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me, seeth him that sent me*, John xii. 44, 45. *He that hateth me, hateth my Father also*, chap. xv. 23. So *he that serveth the Son, serveth the Father also. For the Son is in the Father, and the Father in the Son*, chap. xiv. 20. And therefore it is impossible to serve the one without the other. But whosoever serves the Son, doth, *ipso facto*, serve the Father that is in him, and one with him.

And besides, no man can serve the Father but by the Son, nor by him neither, without serving of him: as he himself again saith, *He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father that sent him*, John v. 23. For the Father accepts of no honour from men, but what comes to him through his Son, the only Mediator between him and them. How piously, how virtuously so ever they may seem to live, and whatsoever honour

and worship they pretend to give to God, nothing they do is acceptable to him in any other way, than by Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. ii. 5. Neither can any man so much as *come unto the Father, but by him*, John xiv. 6. And therefore they who do not first come unto the Son, believe in him, and serve him, can never be the servants of God, nor do any one thing that is pleasing in his sight. Whereas they who truly and faithfully serve the Son of God, are so high in the favour and esteem of God the Father, that he hath a particular respect, yea, an honour for them. I should not have ventured upon so high an expression, but that I have the warrant of Christ himself for it, saying, *If any man serve me, him will my Father honour*, John xii. 26.

This therefore is the Lord, the Lord God omnipotent, whom the kings and judges of the earth are here commanded to serve. Not like David, though he was a sovereign prince in his own country, he had no power over any other, much less over all the kings and judges of the earth, so as to require them to be wise, and to instruct them what to do, and whom to serve: and therefore this, and all such places in the holy Scriptures, where commands are laid upon all the kings and nations upon earth, most evidently shew their divine authority; that they are not of any private interpretation, or human invention, but were given by the inspiration of God, the King of kings, the Lord of the whole earth, by whom *kings reign, and princes decree justice*; by whom *princes rule, and nobles, and all the judges of the earth*, Prov. viii. 15, 16. They are all but his deputies or vicegerents in their respective kingdoms and provinces, his ministers, to execute his laws and judgments. And therefore when some of them had conspired and set themselves against the Lord, and against his Christ; he, by his Holy Spirit, issued forth this his divine proclamation, wherein, having first acquainted them with that supreme authority, which he had given to his Son Christ over all the earth, he lays this strict command

upon all sovereign princes, and their under-officers in all parts of the earth : *Be wise now therefore, O ye kings ; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.*

He, in many other places of his holy oracles, hath required all people to serve him, but here he commands kings and judges, as such, to do it ; not only in their private capacities, as they also are men, but likewise as they are kings that govern whole empires or countries, and make laws to be observed by all that live within their several dominions : and as judges, or subordinate officers, empowered and commissioned by their respective kings to see their said laws put in execution. It is in this their public capacity, that the universal Monarch of the world speaks to them in this place, and commands them all to serve him, that so their people may do it, not only every one by himself, but all together, as they are a nation, or kingdom, a society of men united together under one common head. As we read in the prophet Daniel, that to the Son of man was given *dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him*, Dan. vii. 14. So it ought to be all the earth over ; and so it will be, when he sees good to ask it of the Father : but when that will be, it is in vain for us to enquire, seeing it is not revealed to us.

It is sufficient for us to know, that many kingdoms upon earth have already professed their subjection to him, and that all are bound to serve him ; for this command being laid upon kings, as such, it doth not affect their persons only, but their kingdoms, and reacheth all that are advised with, or any way concerned in their government, or in devising laws for the better administration of it. They are all obliged by this, and many other divine commands, to serve him in it ; who, by his over-ruling providence, puts them into such a public station, for that end and purpose, that they may be able to do it. But what it is properly to *serve the Lord*, and how all such both may and ought to do it, are ques-

tions that deserve our most serious enquiry ; and therefore I shall endeavour to search into the bottom of them, and lay them as open as I can in few terms.

What it is properly to *serve the Lord*, may well be made a question ; forasmuch as at first sight it may seem to be impossible : for who can serve him that lacks nothing ? What can men do for him, who is neither better nor worse for any thing which they do ? It is true, he being infinitely glorious in himself, cannot possibly receive any accessions of glory from any other, much less from his own creatures, who have nothing but what they receive from him ; and therefore he cannot be said to be served by them, in that sense wherein they are said to serve one another. But he is pleased to look upon them as serving him, when they own or acknowledge his divine glory and authority over them, and shew they do so, by all such means and methods as he, for that purpose, hath prescribed to them ; for he having made, and still governing all things for himself, even for the manifestation of his own glory, such of his creatures as reflect upon it, admire it, and manifest they do so in all their actions, and strive what they can that others should do it too ; they carry on the same design that he doth in the world, and are therefore said to serve him, in that they are subservient to him in setting forth his honour and glory. Thus all the creatures that he hath made capable of it, as angels and men, are bound to serve their Creator ; and unless they do it, they do not answer the end of their creation, but live to no purpose in the world.

Now, as in the creation and government of the world by his word, God hath, and still doth manifest the glory of his wisdom, and power, and goodness ; so in the redemption of fallen man by his Son, or Word incarnate, he discovered the glory of his grace and truth, which otherwise, as far as we know, would never have appeared in the world ; *for grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*, John i. 17 It is in him only that God hath promised grace or mercy to mankind ; and it is in him

only that his truth appears in his fulfilling of the said promises : and therefore he is said to be *glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe*, 2 Thess. i. 10. because they give him the glory of these divine perfections, and so truly serve him, which other people do not.

Wherefore, by serving Jehovah the Lord, we are here to understand the setting forth and promoting his honour and glory, as he is the Redeemer of mankind, as well as the Creator and Governor of the world : when men do not only believe all that is recorded, as done and said by him in his holy word, worship and obey him themselves, and trust wholly on him for all things necessary to their eternal salvation ; but likewise do what they can that his *name may be glorified*, 2 Thess. i. 12. his Gospel propagated, his church and kingdom upon earth defended and enlarged, his doctrine received, his laws obeyed, his praises celebrated, his servants encouraged, and his supreme authority and dominion owned, admired, and feared by all, *that every tongue may confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*, Phil. ii. 11. They who in their several places, and according to their several abilities, contribute any thing towards these great ends, and do it heartily, as to the Lord, they truly *serve the Lord Christ*, as St. Paul saith the Colossians did, and shall accordingly *receive the reward of the inheritance from him*, Col. iii. 24.

From hence it is easy to gather, how any man, in his place and station, may some way or other *serve the Lord* : but this command being here laid upon the kings and judges of the earth, such as make and such as execute the laws in every kingdom ; I shall take occasion from hence to shew more particularly, how he may and ought to be served by the laws of any kingdom ; and by all such as are either consulted with in the making, or entrusted with the administration, of them ; and, by consequence, how whole kingdoms also may *serve the Lord*, Psal. cii. 22.

This, I confess, may seem a bold attempt in a private person; but I look not upon myself, in this place, as in a private capacity, but as a public minister, or, as the apostle expresseth it, *an ambassador for Christ*, 2 Cor. v. 20. for Christ, the Sovereign of the world. It is in his name only I speak, and shall take care to follow the instructions that he hath given in his holy word, not doubting but many will be as glad to hear how they may *serve the Lord* in such a public station, as I can be to put them in mind of it, according to my bounden duty to our common Lord and Master.

But to set this in such a light, that we may all take a full view of it, it will be necessary to prepare the way, by laying down a few general propositions.

1. Almighty God, here called the Lord, as he is the Maker and Governor, so he is the supreme Lawgiver of the world: *There is one Lawgiver*, saith St. James, *who is able to save and to destroy*, James iv 12. Who that is, we may learn from the prophet, saying, *The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King, he will save us*, Isa. xxxiii. 22. The same Lord that is our Judge, or King, and our Saviour, he likewise is our Lawgiver, or, as the word may be rendered, the maker of our laws or statutes, which he makes only by signifying his will what he would have done; his word being a law to all things that he hath made.

2. This universal Lawgiver of the world, as he hath given laws to all things else suitable to their respective natures, and the ends for which he made them, so he hath given laws to all mankind, as they are reasonable and free agents, and so capable of reflecting upon them, and of observing them upon choice. These laws he first wrote upon the tables of man's heart; when they were defaced there, he published them upon mount Sinai, then transcribed them with his own finger upon two tables of stone; after that, he explained them by his prophets, and at last with his own mouth, when he

was upon earth, adding some new ones, to shew that all the other likewise were given by him.

3. All the laws that God hath made for mankind to observe, are recorded in holy Scripture, given by his inspiration, as appears also from the very laws which are there recorded ; for who can give laws to all kings, such as that in my text, but he that is the King of kings ? who can give laws to all the people and nations upon earth, but he that is the Lord of the whole earth ? Who can give laws to the very hearts of men, to their thoughts, and the secret motions of the will, that never break forth into act, but only he who is the only searcher of hearts ? Who could threaten hell and damnation to those who break his laws, but he who can *destroy both soul and body in hell* ? Who could promise eternal life and happiness to such as keep his laws, but he in whose power alone it is to give it ? So clearly doth the divine authority of the holy Scriptures shine forth in the very laws which are there recorded, that he who doth not wilfully shut his eyes, cannot but see it.

4. As the supreme Governor of the world hath thus given laws for all mankind to observe, in their behaviour both to him and one another, that every one may govern himself, and order all his affairs and actions according to the will of him that made and preserveth him ; so he hath given power to every kingdom or nation to make bye-laws for the security and government of itself, and all the members of it, as such. He himself made such for the children of Israel, when he was, in a special manner, their king, having chosen them, out of all other nations, to be his own peculiar people ; for that they were nearer of kin than other people to the flesh he designed to take upon him. Besides the moral laws which he gave to mankind in general, he made several judgments, as they are called, or judicial laws, for this his own people, for the better keeping up of the civil polity or government among themselves, and for the better administration of his moral laws to all that

lived in that community. But these laws being made only for that nation, and for that only, so long as they continued a distinct nation of themselves, they ceased in course at the dissolution of their government; and it is not necessary they should be received or observed in any other nation, as our church hath wisely declared.

5. Although God hath given this power to all kingdoms and nations to make laws for the better support and government of themselves, yet he hath not given them leave to repeal any of his own laws, nor to enact any thing contrary to them. It is usual for a prince, when he grants a charter to a city or corporation within his dominions, to give power therein to make bye-laws for the management of the affairs of that community, provided they be no way repugnant to his own or the common laws of his kingdom: if they be, they are null from the beginning. And so are they which are made in any particular kingdom, if they be in the least contrary to any of the common laws of the world, those which the King of kings hath made for all mankind, both kings and people to observe. In that case, the general law is, that *we must obey God rather than man*: so that people are so far from being obliged to observe such laws, that they are obliged not to observe them. And all such laws, though they may perhaps, upon some mistake, be made to a good end, yet being evil in themselves, no good can ever come of them; and they who make them, expose themselves and their country also to the displeasure of God, who will, be sure, vindicate the honour of his own laws, and punish the contempt that is thrown upon them, if not presently, at least one time or other

6. But when such laws are made in any country, by those to whom the foresaid power is committed, which are agreeable, or no way repugnant to the laws of God, all that live under that government are bound to observe such laws, in obedience to the laws of God him-

self, who commandeth *every soul to be subject to the higher powers* under which he lives, Rom. xiii. 1 and to be *subject not only for wrath, but for conscience sake*, ver. 5. not only for fear of the punishment, which may be inflicted for breach of the law, but for fear of God, who hath commanded him to keep it, and to *submit himself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake*, 1 Pet. ii. 13. for his sake, or in obedience to him, who hath given this power to kings and governors, to make such laws for the defence, security, and benefit of the government, without which it could not so well subsist, nor the people that live under it serve God in peace and quietness. Neither is it possible for subjects to observe those commands of God, whereby he requires their obedience to the powers which he hath set over them, but only in such things as he himself hath not determined, but hath left the determination of them to his deputies or ministers in every country, according as the necessities of time and place may require: and therefore when he himself was upon earth, in the likeness and nature of man, being, as such, but a subject, he would not take upon him, when desired, to decide a controversy between two brethren that contended about their inheritance, but left them to the law of the land, saying, *Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?* Luke xii. 14. Though he was then also the judge and divider over all mankind, yet having given power to the magistrates of the country to make laws and appoint judges for the decision of such controversies betwixt man and man, he would not recall his power upon such a particular occasion, but referred the cause wholly to the laws which were made by it, and caused it to be left upon record, that all people may know that it is his will, that they should submit to the laws of the land where they live, and stand by them in all things wherein they do not contradict his own.

I shall premise only one thing more, which is, that although sovereign princes and emperors have this power

of making laws committed to them, yet they seldom or never exercise it, without consulting some or other of their subjects, which are supposed to understand the state of the kingdom, the temper and circumstances of the people, and what occasion there is for having any new laws imposed upon them ; and therefore they who are so consulted, are accountable to God for what laws they advise, as well as their sovereign is for making them : especially in such empires or kingdoms, as we have several in this part of the world, which are so constituted either originally, or by the favour of their princes, that the sovereign never signs or makes any new law, till such a number of his subjects, or all met together by their representatives, have considered of the matter, and upon mature deliberation agree, advise, and desire it may be passed into a law. In this case, all who are called together for such a purpose, ought to have the same care of what laws are made, as if they themselves were to make them ; for though they are not made by them, yet they would not be made without them : and therefore they also are under the obligation which is here laid upon kings, to serve the Lord in it.

And how they may do it, may be easily seen from the premises thus laid down ; for from hence we may first observe, that they who have such an opportunity put into their hands of serving God in so high a capacity, should make it their chief end and design to serve him in it ; for this is one of these common laws, which the almighty Governor of the world hath made, for all mankind to observe in all the actions of their life ; even to make his glory the ultimate end of every one of them. *Whether ye eat or drink*, saith he by his apostle, *or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*, 1 Cor. x. 31. And again, *Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*, and so for his service and honour, Col. iii. 17 And if this should be the end of every man's actions, much more of such as govern a whole kingdom or empire. I know

all that are consulted in such public affairs, ought to serve their king and their country too : but that they can never do, unless they first serve him, upon whose good will and pleasure the welfare of all the kings and kingdoms upon earth depends. Neither can they be truly said to serve him, unless they design to do so : although they may, perhaps, do something which he may make for his service, by ordering it so, as that it shall turn to his glory ; yet they cannot be said to serve him in it, unless they design it ; and design it too before all things else, so as to make his glory their first and chief end : otherwise they are so far from serving, that they dishonour him, by preferring something else before him ; whereas, they who make his honour the ultimate end of what they do, thereby shew, that they own him to be the chiefest good, the first cause, and the supreme disposer of all things ; which is itself much for his honour, and therefore a great part of that service which we owe him.

Now they who have thus the service of God always uppermost in their eye, cannot but use the most effectual means they can think of, that others also may serve him as well as they, in their several vocations and callings ; and if they be called to consult about laws to be given to a whole kingdom, they will, in course, contrive and advise, or at least agree to such as will most conduce to keep up and promote the serving of God, that he may be better known, admired, adored, and worshipped, than otherwise he would be, in the whole kingdom, and all the dominions belonging to it : for the doing of this, is that which they are here commanded, and which they themselves are therefore supposed to aim at ; it is serving the Lord.

But, for that purpose, they must do what they can, that nothing may pass for a law among men, that is in the least contrary to the law of God : for his laws, as well as his works, are all made for his honour, that men by keeping them might serve him ; and therefore, so

far as any human is repugnant to his divine laws, so much is detracted from his service: and besides that, they who attempt to enact any thing upon earth, that is contrary to what was before enacted in heaven, fly in the very face of heaven, and bid defiance to the Sovereign of the whole world; which is the highest affront and dishonour that is possible for his creatures to cast upon him, and will be accordingly punished one time or other, as they will find to their cost, whether they believe it as yet or no: whereas, they who, in drawing up any human laws, keep as close as it is possible to the laws of God, and make it their great care and study to avoid all appearance of contradicting them, out of an holy fear of displeasing him, thereby plainly declare, that they agnize or acknowledge his supreme authority over the world, and the wisdom, goodness, justice, and excellency of the laws which he hath made for it, and therefore may be truly said to *serve the Lord with fear*, as they are here commanded.

But the laws of God being written originally in languages that are not commonly understood, there have been, and still may be, doubts and questions raised about the true sense and meaning of some of them; and if this should happen, as it sometimes doth, in the compiling or making any human laws, what course must they take who are engaged in it, that they may be sure to keep within the compass of the divine, and never transgress the bounds which God hath set them? To that it may be answered, that many of the old laws of this, as well as other realms, were at first written in such a language, that few in our days, if any, do fully understand; and many other are so worded, that questions often arise about the interpretation of them: in which case, the law itself hath provided a remedy, by referring it to the judges of the realm, to resolve such doubts and interpret such laws as are in controversy and dispute; and the sense, which they, by virtue of their place and office, give of the law, in such a case, is

taken for the law, as much as if there was no dispute about it. So here, when God was graciously pleased to commit his laws to writing, he ordered them to be written in such languages, as were vulgarly understood of those people to whom they were first committed, and from whom they were to be communicated to the rest of the world : and foreseeing that doubts would sometimes arise about the interpretation of them, he inserted it into the body of his laws, how he would have them interpreted, even by such as he should choose into the priests' office, to minister to him at his altar, and so have more immediate access to him than other people had ; for so saith the law, *The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth ; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts*, Mal. ii. 7 Not, *they should only*, as it is in our translation, but *they shall seek it at his mouth*, as it is in the original, and so it is made a law, commanding all people to do so ; and the reason also is given for it, even because the priest, as such, *is the messenger of the Lord of hosts*. He, as a priest, speaks not his own sense, but the sense of the lawgiver, as being his messenger ; as we read of Caiaphas, that *he spake not of himself, but being high-priest that year, he prophesied*, or declared, that according to the true meaning of the law, *Jesus should die for that nation*, &c. John xi. 51 And when the Lawgiver himself was upon earth, he explained and confirmed the same law with his own mouth, saying to the multitude that was about him, as well as to his own disciples, *The scribes and pharisees sit in Moses' seat. All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do ; but do not ye after their works, for they say, and do not*, Matt. xxiii. 2, 3. Though in themselves they were generally ill men, and therefore not to be imitated in what they did ; yet as they sat in Moses' seat, and so had the power of interpreting the law, all people are here commanded *to observe and do what they said* : and if they happened to give a wrong sense of

the law, they were to bear the blame and punishment, not the people that were obliged to take it from them.

And when the Lord Jesus was to ascend in our nature into heaven, he assured his apostles, that he would be with them and their successors in the ministry of his church *always unto the end of the world*, Matt. xxviii. 20. that the Holy Spirit should *abide with them for ever*, John xiv. 16. and *lead them into all truth*, chap. xvi. 13. and that he who heareth them, heareth him, Luke x. 16. By which and the like expressions, he did not only promise his apostles and their successors, the bishops and pastors of his church, in all ages, to direct and assist them in the execution of their office; but likewise required all people to hearken to them, as to himself, and so to take the meaning of his laws, as they by his direction should interpret them. And accordingly we read, that when there was a dispute among his first disciples about the law concerning circumcision and other Mosaic rites, they sent to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, and took their interpretation of the law in that case, as given by the Holy Ghost himself, Acts xv. 28.

And this hath been the sense and practice of the church of Christ, as might easily be shewn, in all ages. Neither is there any Christian knowledge we know of at this day, but where the ministers of Christ are consulted in all cases relating to religion and the laws of God: particularly in this kingdom, whensoever any laws are to be made, the whole clergy of the realm is summoned to appear, either in their own persons, or by their representatives in convocation, that they may be ready to give their advice, if there be occasion, in all such cases. Neither doth any law pass, without the advice of the lords spiritual, as well as temporal. And therefore, when any thing is proposed that is repugnant to the laws of God, if they let it pass without shewing it is so, the fault will lie at their door, and they must answer for it at the last day. For it is to be supposed, that none

of the assembly would agree to any such thing, if they knew it to be such; so that this is certainly the best course that could be taken, for those who are advised with to make laws, that they may be sure not to dishonour or offend, but serve the Lord by it.

But they will still serve the Lord more effectually in this high and honourable station, if they likewise establish, strengthen, and enforce his laws and service with civil sanctions, as the church doth it with ecclesiastical or spiritual. The church, when it was first planted by Christ, and propagated by his apostles, subsisted, as we know, and increased for near 300 years together, without the assistance of the civil powers, which were generally so far from shewing it any favour, that they endeavoured all they could to extirpate and root it up. And at this day, in many places, where the civil magistrates are all Mahometans or Heathens, the church still stands upon its own legs, by virtue of that power which it receives from Christ the head of it: who hath promised, that *the gates of hell shall never prevail against it*, Matt. xvi. 18. He to whom all things are present, knew, that seeing no man can be saved but by him, nor by him without being a member of his body the church; therefore all the powers of hell would set themselves against his church, and stir up those upon earth also to oppose, and, if it were possible, to destroy it. But still it hath not only kept its ground, but got more; and will do so to the end of the world, notwithstanding all the opposition that men or devils can make against it: and all by means of that power which it hath within itself, to make laws and constitutions for the defence and government of itself, and for the better keeping up the true faith, and fear, and worship of God, and that obedience which is due to his laws entrusted with her; and to punish such as obstinately refuse to obey them, by casting them out of her society, and so cutting them off as rotten members from the body of Christ, and to

receive them in again upon their hearty repentance and promise of amendment.

But although the church be thus a distinct body of itself, under Christ the head, yet he being *the head likewise over all things to the church*, Eph. i. 22. hath so ordered it, that many whole kingdoms have received his faith, and therefore taken his church under their protection. In all which kingdoms, the church is of the same extent with the nation itself, established by its laws, and so made a national church, under the same king by whom the whole nation is governed; who is supreme head upon earth of that particular church, under Christ the head of all the churches in the world: which taken all together make up that which we call the catholic or universal church.

Now, where a national church is thus established, not only they who first established it, but all they also who make or advise laws, whereby she may more freely and effectually administer the means of salvation, and exercise the power which Christ hath given her for that purpose, they also serve the Lord in it, not only by owning his authority, and defending his church in general, but likewise because he will be thereby better served and worshipped all the kingdom over, than otherwise he would be, and will have more saints and servants there, who may be meet to live with him and praise him for ever.

Yea, by this means the whole kingdom serves the Lord; for when his public service is established by the laws of the kingdom, and all the people in it are required to serve him accordingly, though there may perhaps be many particular persons who refuse or neglect it, that is only their personal fault, not the fault of the kingdom; which, as the kingdom, acts only by its laws. And if they require all the subjects to perform such worship and service to Almighty God, as his church, upon mature deliberation, hath established and deter-

mined to be agreeable to his will, for the honour of his name, and the edification of his people, the whole kingdom, as such, performs it. And therefore all such as make or advise such laws, howsoever they may fail in other things, in that they plainly serve the Lord.

And so they do likewise by enforcing, with civil sanctions, the observation of any particular law of God; which is commonly broken or neglected, by such who having *their consciences seared with a hot iron*, have not so much sense of God or their duty to him, as to regard the laws and censures of the church. As for example, God hath strictly forbidden all men to take his sacred name in vain, to curse, or to swear falsely by it; now when any sort of people in a kingdom are come to such an height of impiety, as to live in the constant breach of so plain divine laws, if there be a law made for the restraining of them from it, by temporal penalties, which they are more sensible of than they are of spiritual; though some of them may, perhaps, notwithstanding such a law, continue in any of these horrid sins, yet it will not be imputed to the kingdom itself as a national sin, because it hath sufficiently declared its abhorrence of it, and done what it could to suppress it. And all that have any hand in drawing up such a law against profane swearing and cursing, do not only serve the kingdom, but God himself by it, in taking so much care that his holy name may not be profaned, nor his laws slighted.

I need not instance in more particulars, where a word is enough. But I cannot but here call to mind, what excellent laws have been made in this happy kingdom; therefore happy, because such excellent laws have been made in it, that if they were but as generally observed, as they were piously made, this would certainly be the most glorious kingdom upon earth. But to our shame and grief be it spoken, many of our laws are neglected as much as if they had been repealed, and but very few kept as they ought in duty and conscience to be. I had

rather pour in oil than rake in sores, especially those of a kingdom: but I cannot forbear taking notice, how, notwithstanding all our laws to the contrary, we have now many heathens among us, people that were never baptized or made Christians; and the worst of it is, that we are oft at a loss to know whether they be so or no. Of those who are christened, few are instructed in the principles of the Christian religion, because their parents refuse to send them while they are young, and they themselves afterwards think scorn to come. The great badge of our religion, the sacrament of the Lord's supper, is so shamefully laid aside, that a great part of the kingdom never receive it at all, and very few as often as the law requires. There are many about the city, as well as in the country, that never go to church all the year, especially in great parishes, where they have not churches enough to go to, and so *live as without God in the world*. I dread to speak it, but I cannot help it, there are some, I hope not many among us, who are given up to such *hardness of heart, and contempt of God's word*, that they openly reject it; and others, near a-kin to them, who have the confidence to deny and oppose the divine power or Godhead of our ever-blessed Redeemer, and so strike at the foundation of the Christian, and all true religion; and that too, not only in their private discourse, but publicly in print.

These are some of the grievances, which, though I know not how to redress, yet, as a minister of Christ, I could not but mention; heartily wishing, that all they who are entrusted with it, would serve the Lord as faithfully in executing the laws, as they did who advised and made them; we should then see another face both in church and state. But, for that purpose, they must first keep the laws themselves, and so set the rest of the nation an example how to do it. And then they would do well to consider, that the best laws signify nothing, unless they be observed: and that all those who by their oath and place are bound to put the laws in exe-

cution, such especially as are made for the honour of God, unless they do it, they do not only fail in their duty to the king and their country, but to God himself; and contract unto themselves the guilt of all the impieties and immoralities which are committed by their default and neglect, so as to make themselves obnoxious to the displeasure of God, and to all the punishments which he hath threatened in that case. We know what old Eli suffered for not restraining the vices and debaucheries of his two sons, when it was in his power to do it; and all because of the dishonour which was thereby cast upon the worship and service of God; who therefore, in the message he sent him, told him plainly, *Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed*, 1 Sam. ii. 30. From whence we may likewise observe, that he looks upon the contempt that is thrown upon his laws and service as affecting himself, and therefore will accordingly punish it: and that all who faithfully use the power committed to them for the suppressing of profaneness, and the promoting of piety and religion, they thereby perform the duty here required of them; they serve the Lord, for they honour him, and are accordingly honoured and rewarded by him.

And who would not serve so great a Lord? the greatest in the whole world, the Lord of heaven and earth, the Lord our Maker, the Lord our Saviour, the Lord and Judge both of quick and dead, before whom all mankind must ere long give account, how they have served him in their several generations, and whether they have done it or not: happy are they who shall then be found to have served him with the talents which he put into their hands. Let us hear what he himself saith, *If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be. If any man serve me, him will my Father honour*, John xii. 26. Where we have it from his own mouth, that they who serve him upon earth, shall be and live with him in

heaven, and shall be honoured by God the Father himself : and what an honour is this, to be honoured by him that is the fountain of all true honour ? This honour have all the saints and servants of the Lord Christ, who also himself hath that respect for them, that whilst other people are left to the general providence of God, he takes them into his own particular care, interceding continually with the Father for them ; by which means they are not only kept in the favour of God, but have *the light of his countenance* always shining upon them, and all things concurring to make them happy both here and for ever.

SERMON XXV.

THE UNITY OF CHRIST WITH GOD THE FATHER.

JOHN x. 30.

I and the Father are one.

ALTHOUGH God was pleased at first to imprint upon our minds as deep and clear a sense of himself as earthly creatures are capable of ; yet now, by our fall, it is so defaced, that there is little of it to be seen, so little, that few take any notice at all of it, but most men live as without God in the world ; and all would have done so, but that he hath been graciously pleased to reveal and make known himself to us in his holy word, by using such names, titles, and expressions of himself, whereby we are not only put in mind of him, but directed how to think and what to believe concerning him : and whatsoever he hath thus said of himself, as we have all the reason that can be to believe it ; so unless we do so, we can never recover a right and true sense of God, because not such a one as is agreeable to the revelations which he hath made of himself to us.

Among which we find, that to make himself known as plain as words could do it to our capacities, all along in the Old Testament he calls himself by two names especially, using sometimes the one, sometimes the other by itself, and sometimes both together, and they are יהוה and אלהים. The first, *Jehovah*, signifies essence or being in general, or as the Greeks call it τὸ ὄν, which

can be but one, and therefore that name is always of the singular number: the other name, *Elohim*, is of the plural number, and yet nevertheless it is all along joined with verbs and adjectives of the singular, as if itself was so; which plainly shews, that if this universal essence or being be but one, yet there are several persons, or subsistencies, or whatsoever else we may call them, so existing in it, that they are all, and every one, that one essence or being. And accordingly we find frequent mention made, as of God himself, so likewise of his Son or Word, and also of his Spirit, as being all three that same one Jehovah, or being in general; or, as we now speak, the same God, which we have therefore sufficient ground to believe from what he hath revealed of himself in the Old Testament.

But as God thus spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, he hath in those last days spoken unto us by his said Son, or Word, by whom he made the worlds, who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, (Heb. i. 1, 2, 3.) hath more fully explained this great truth, and set it in as clear a light as our weak eyes can bear; and the words which I have now read, as they are in the original, will serve as a key, to let us into the right understanding of whatsoever he hath said concerning it, at least in respect of the Father and himself, and, by consequence, of the Holy Spirit too; for here he saith, Ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ Πατήρ ἓν εἰμεν, *I and the Father are one.*

Where we may first observe, that he plainly distinguisheth himself from the Father, speaking of himself and the Father, not as one and the same person (according to the Sabellian heresy) under several names, but as really distinct from one another: *I and the Father*; and, *I and the Father are*, in the plural number. And this is his constant way of speaking all over the Gospel. As when he speaks of himself with relation to God, he calls him the *Father*; so when he speaks of the Father with relation to himself, he calls himself the

Son, and so distinguisheth himself from the Father. And that we may the better understand both the distinction and relation there is between the Father and him, he often tells us, that he was sent by the Father, John v. 37 viii. 16. xii. 49, &c. that he came in the name of the Father, chap. v. 43. that he was sealed and sanctified by the Father, chap. vi. 27 x. 36. that he spake as the Father said to him, chap. xii. 50. as the Father taught him, chap. viii. 28. and what he had heard of the Father, chap. xv. 15. that he sought not his own will, but the will of the Father, chap. v. 30. that he did the works of his Father, chap. x. 37 that he did his works in the name of the Father, ver. 25. that he liveth by the Father, chap. vi. 57 And, *as the Father*, saith he, *hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself*, chap. v. 26. By which, and such-like expressions, which often occur, he gives us plainly to understand, that he received his doctrine, his works, his power, and his very life from the Father, that life which he hath in himself, as the Father hath it in himself; which being the divine nature or essence itself, (for none hath life in himself but God,) he is therefore properly God of God, and so another or distinct person from the Father, but still the same God with him.

And that is the other thing to be observed here, *I and the Father are one*; which cannot be so well understood in English, as in the original Greek, where it is not *εἷς* in the masculine gender, as if they were one person, but in the neuter *ἐν*, one thing, one being. And so St. John speaks of all the three divine Persons, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, *οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἐν εἰσι*; these three Persons are one thing, 1 John v. 7. This is that which God himself asserts of himself in the Old Testament also, and so gives us the most infallible exposition of this phrase in the New, where he saith in Moses, Deut. vi. 4. *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God* (our *אלהים* in the plural number) *is יהוה אחד one Jeho-*

vah ; that is, as I observed before, one being, one essence, or, as the Greeks express it, *μὴ οὐσία*. From whence the council of Nice rightly declared, both from the doctrine of the apostolical and primitive church before that time, and also from the holy Scriptures themselves, that the Son of God is *ὁμοούσιος*, of the same essence with the Father, which is perfectly the same in Greek that *יהוה אחד* is in Hebrew. And therefore the Arians of old, as well as the Socinians now, in this as in other things, did but betray their ignorance, when they objected against that word as invented by the said council. For besides that it had been used in the council all along before, it was taken out of God's own word, and is nothing but a Greek translation of the Hebrew text. From whence we may also see by the way, what good ground the primitive and catholic church had to use the words *οὐσία*, *ὑπόστασις*, *essentia*, *substantia*, *subsistentia*, and the like, in discoursing upon the most blessed Trinity in unity, they being all grounded upon the most proper name of God, and that which he himself useth in speaking of himself, even *יהוה* *Jehovah*, from *הוה* *to be*, or exist, as he himself also explains it, where he saith, *I am that I am*, and simply, *I am*, *Exod. iii. 14*. And after him St. John the Evangelist, saying, *Ἀπὸ τοῦ ὃ ὦν, καὶ ὃ ἦν, καὶ ὃ ἐρχόμενος*, *from which is, which was, and which is to come*, *Apoc. i. 4*. that is, *ἀπὸ τοῦ יהוה*, from *Jehovah*, from the being which always is. Which is also necessarily implied, or rather expressed, as well as one word could do it, in my text, where the Father and the Son are said to be *ἐν*, *unum*, which cannot be otherwise understood, according to the idiom of that tongue, than of *unum ens*, one being, one Jehovah.

This, I confess, is a mystery that is above the reach of human reason to comprehend, as all the divine perfections are, as well as this. But it is far from being against reason, or a contradiction, as the Socinians pretend. For we do not say, that three persons are one person, or that the Father and the Son are one person :

that indeed would look something like a contradiction. But there is not one word in all the holy Scriptures that look that way. All that they, and we from them, assert, is, that the three divine Persons are one Jehovah, and that the Father and the Son are one being; ὁμοούσιος, of one and the same essence or nature, one God: which though our reason cannot comprehend, yet it requires us to believe it, because we have his word for it, who is reason, and wisdom, and truth itself; for that this is his meaning in these words, appears not only from the words themselves, as I have already shewn, but from the context too, both before and after.

In the next verse but one before my text, speaking of his sheep, he saith, *Neither shall any pluck them out of my hands*: in the next verse he saith, *And none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hands*; and so makes his hand or power to be the same with the Father's, which is a thing he would have us take special notice of; and therefore takes frequent occasions to acquaint us, that he can do, and always doth, whatsoever the Father doth. Sometimes he tells his disciples, that the Father will send the Holy Ghost, John xiv. 26. sometimes that he will send him, chap. xv. 26. xvi. 7. In one place he saith, *Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name, he will give it*, chap. xvi. 23. In another, *If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it*, chap. xiv. 14. *As the Father*, saith he, *raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will*, chap. v. 21. And accordingly, as he himself is sometimes said to be raised from the dead by God, Acts ii. 24. so he himself saith, that he will raise himself, John ii. 19. by his own power, chap. x. 18. which could be no other than the power of God, one and the same power that the Father hath; and therefore he must needs be one and the same God: especially, considering, that as what the one doth, the other doth also; so what is done to the one, is done to the other too. *He that hateth me*, saith he, *hateth my Father also*, John

xv. 23. *If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also ; chap. viii. 19. And he that seeth me, seeth him that sent me, chap. xii. 45. Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip ? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father : and how sayest thou, Shew us the Father, chap. xiv. 9.* How could this possibly be, if he and the Father were not one God ? And with what face also could he otherwise join himself with the Father ? saying, *As we are one, John xvii. 22. And we will come unto him, and make our abode with him, chap. xiv. 23.* What creature durst be thus bold with God ? Who but he who is his fellow, and equal in all things to the Father ? And yet the Son doth not only do this, but in speaking of the Father and himself, he commonly puts himself before the Father, *I and the Father that sent me, John viii. 16. and in my text, I and the Father are one :* for which, I do not see what shew of reason can be given, but that he doth it on purpose to signify to us, that the Father and he are so perfectly one, that there is no priority of the one before the other ; nor any difference at all between them, as to their nature : so that it is all one which is named first, they being both one and the same God.

He that reads the Gospel, especially of St. John, will meet with many such expressions uttered by our Saviour, which none could utter but God himself ; and which he therefore doubtless uttered, that we might believe him to be God. But I mention these here only upon the occasion of our Saviour's saying immediately before my text, that none can pluck his sheep out of his, or out of his Father's hand, and so making his power to be the same with the Father's : which lest his hearers should wonder at, he shews them the reason why he said so, adding immediately, *I and the Father are one : one in essence, and therefore one in power ;* which otherwise could not be. For if he was inferior to, or any way different from, his Father in his essence

or nature, he must needs be so in his power too. And therefore the occasion of his saying these words, sufficiently demonstrates that to be his meaning in them.

The same appears also from what follows my text; our Saviour had no sooner said this, but *the Jews took up stones again to stone him*, (as they had done before upon the like occasion, chap. viii. 59.) *upon which Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from the Father, for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy, and because thou, being a man, makest thyself God*, ver. 32, 33. From whence it is plain, that the Jews, who were perfectly acquainted with the language our Saviour used, and what was commonly meant by the words he spake, when he said, *I and the Father are one*, understood his meaning to be, that he was God, *one God with the Father*; and therefore accused him of blasphemy: which they could not have done, if they had not believed that to be the meaning of the words he spake. To avoid the imputation of which horrid crime our Saviour would certainly have denied that to be his meaning, if it had not been so.

But he is so far from denying that his meaning was, *that he is God, one with the Father*; that he proves he might truly say it without blasphemy, and that he really is so. That he might truly say it, he proves by an argument *a minori ad majus*. *Is it not written*, saith he, *in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he call them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?* ver. 34, 35, 36. As if he had said, If magistrates, who are only God's vicegerents and ministers, are called gods, as ye know they are in your own law, *how can ye accuse me of blasphemy, for calling myself the Son of God? How truly may I be called by that name,*

whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world? Where we may observe, he doth not say *whom God*, but *whom the Father hath sanctified, and whom he sent into the world; who therefore was before, otherwise he could not have been sent thither.* We may likewise observe here, that whereas he had before said, *that he and the Father are one*; he here saith, that he had said, *he was the Son of God.* From whence it appears, that, in the language of our Saviour, to be the Son of God, and to be one with the Father, is the same thing, even to be God himself, *the living and true God*; as the Jews understood him, not only in this, but in another parallel place, where it is said, *Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he had not only broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God,* John v. 18. Because he called himself the Son of God, or said, God was his Father, the Jews concluded, that he made himself equal to God. But they could never have raised such an inference from thence, unless it had been the received opinion among them, that none can be truly called the Son of God, but he must needs be equal to God, or of the same nature with him; and, by consequence, that wheresoever Jesus is called the Son of God, as he often is, the meaning according to the common use of the phrase at that time was, that he was *ὁμοούσιος*, of the same nature or substance with the Father, and so equal to him.

And that he really is so, he in the next place proves from the works he did; for immediately after the words before spoken of, he saith, *If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe me not, believe the works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him,* ver. 37, 38. Where we may again observe, first, that what he had before signified, by saying, that he was the Son of God, and one with the Father, and so truly God, as the Jews rightly understood him; he expresses the same thing

here by saying that the Father is in him, and he in the Father, which is the highest and clearest expression that can be of the unity of their essence, or of their being one and the same God: so that although their persons be distinct, yet they are reciprocally in one another; which could not be, if their essence was not one and the same in both.

But that which I would chiefly observe here is, that our Saviour appeals to his works, as an undeniable argument and demonstration of his divine power and Godhead, that he and the Father are one. *Though ye do not believe me*, saith he, *believe the works*: as if he had said, though ye do not believe me upon my own word, yet believe your own eyes; ye see what I do, such things as none can do but God: which therefore are of themselves sufficient to convince you of the truth of what I said; even, *that I and the Father are one*; as he said also to Philip, *Believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works' sake*, John xiv. 11. Thus he refers the messengers of John the Baptist to the works he did, as a clear proof that he was the Christ, the Son of God, without his telling them that he was so, Matt. xi. 4, 5. Luke vii. 21, 22. And doth not only assert, that the works he did bare witness of him, John v. 36. x. 25. but that their testimony was such as made those who did not believe in him, inexcusable before God. *If I had not*, saith he, *done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now they have both seen (my works), and hateth both me and my Father*, John xv. 24. He appearing among them as a mere man, in a mean condition, did not expect they should take his bare word for it, that he was God. But when he had done such works before their eyes, which no mere man ever did, or could do, none but one that is of infinite power; they were now without all excuse that did not believe him to be God, one with the Father, as his works plainly shewed him to be.

This therefore is that, which I shall now, by his assistance, undertake to prove. It is true, we who already believe what he said to be true, having his word for it, need not any other arguments to persuade us of it. Howsoever, for the further confirmation of our faith, and for the greater conviction of those who do not believe in him, it will be of great use to shew, that the works which Jesus Christ did, while he was upon earth, do plainly demonstrate him to be the one living and true God, of one and the same nature, glory, power, and all divine perfections with the Father, who made and governs the whole world. For which purpose we shall first consider, what works he did, and then how he did them.

The works which our Saviour did upon earth, whereby to shew forth his Godhead, as they are recorded in the holy Gospels, were not only many, but of several sorts and kinds. The most common and ordinary were his curing diseases and distempers in men's bodies; particularly the leprosy, Matt. viii. 3. Luke xvii. 12, 14. the palsy, Matt. ix. 2, the dropsy, Luke xiv. 2, 3. the fever, Matt. viii. 15. John iv. 52. the bloody issue, Matt. ix. 22. the withered hand, Matt. xii. 13. the dumb, Matt. ix. 33. the deaf, that had also an impediment in his speech, Mark vii. 35. the blind, Mark viii. 25. x. 46. two blind men together, Matt. ix. 30. xx. 34. and one that was born blind, John ix. 1, 7. a woman that was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself, Luke xiii. 11, 13. the man who had his ear cut off, Luke xxii. 51. the impotent man that had an infirmity thirty-eight years, John v. 5, 9. the centurion's servant that was ready to die, Luke vii. 1. These are particularly named: but it is said that he healed all manner of sickness, and all manner of diseases among the people, Matt. iv. 23. ix. 35. that great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all, chap. xii. 15. So that when great multitudes came to him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many

others, he healed them, chap. xv. 30. xix. 2. xxi. 14. And besides those that had bodily distempers; they brought to him many that were possessed with devils, and he cast out the spirits with his word, Matt. viii. 16. particularly two in the country of the Gergesenes, ver 28. the woman of Canaan's daughter, chap. xv. 22. a man's son, chap. xvii. 18. the man in the synagogue, Mark i. 23. and him that dwelt among the tombs, Mark v. 2, 3.

Moreover, he walked on the sea, Matt. xiv. 25. John vi. 19. He rebuked and stilled the winds and storms there, Matt. viii. 26. Mark iv. 39. He shewed his power over the fishes, in the great draught that was taken, Luke v. 6. and in the fish that brought money to pay his tribute, Matt. xvii. 27. He fed *five thousand men, besides women and children*, with *five loaves and two fishes*, Matt. xiv. 19, 21. John vi. 9, 10. and *four thousand* with *seven loaves and a few little fishes*, chap. xv. 36, 38. He turned water into wine, John ii. 7, 10. He caused the fig-tree to wither away with his word, Matt. xxi. 19. and raised the three dead persons to life again; the ruler's daughter, Matt. ix. 18, 25. Mark v. 35, 41. the widow's son at Naim, Luke vii. 12, 14. and Lazarus, John xi. 43.

To all which we may add, that he did not only foretel many things to come, but he searched into men's hearts, and could tell them what they thought, Matt. ix. 4. He knew all men, and what was in them, John ii. 24, 25. He knew all things, John xvi. 30. xxi. 17. He told what Nathaniel was in his heart, and where he had been before he came to him, John i. 47, 50. He told the woman of Samaria all things that ever she did, chap. iv. 29, 39. He told his disciples that Lazarus was dead, before any one had told him so, chap. xi. 14. He told them where there was an ass tied, and the owner willingly let them take her away, only upon their saying, *The Lord hath need of her*, Matt. xxi. 2, 3. He told them where they would meet a man bearing a

pitcher of water, and what kind of room he would shew them, where he might eat the passover with them, Luke xxii. 10, 11. And when he called his apostles, he only said to them, *Follow me*; and they immediately left all, and followed him, Matt. iv. 19, 20. ix. 9. Luke v. 27, 28.

Besides these that are particularly recorded, *there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written, every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written*, as an eye-witness saith, John xxi. 25. *But these are written, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*, chap. xx. 31.

And these certainly are, in all reason, sufficient to convince any man of it; for none could do so many and such miracles as these, but the eternal Son of God himself, of the same essence and power with the Father, the Creator and Governor of all things. As for the number, they were more than any one, or all the prophets had done before: Moses, Elijah, and Elisha, are recorded to have done most, but all theirs put together were not so many as he did in three years and a little more; much less were they like to his, or any way comparable to them: many of theirs were works of judgment, his were all works of mercy and goodness, all for the good and benefit of mankind, not so much as one to the prejudice of any. We do not read of any distemper, except Naaman's leprosy, cured by the prophets; but there was no sort of distemper but what he cured. None of the prophets ever cast out devils, but no devil could stand before Christ, not a whole legion of them together, Mark v. 9. whereby he shewed his power over hell itself, which none ever had but God. The like power he shewed also over the water, by turning it into wine, by walking upon it, and disposing of the fishes in it, as he pleased; over the air, by laying the winds and storms; over the fruit of the earth, by making five barley-loaves satisfy above five thousand

people ; over the plants and trees, by causing the fig-tree to wither ; over men's bodies, by healing all diseases they were subject to ; over men's wills, by inclining the apostles to come at his call, and the owner of the ass to send her to him, upon his sending for her ; to which we may also add, the people's going out of the temple, upon his driving, without any civil authority, Matt. xxi. 13. And he shewed his power over death itself, by raising the dead to life. Indeed, he plainly shewed, that he had both perfect knowledge of, and absolute power over, all things that are : nothing came amiss to him, nothing was too hard for him, nor one thing harder than another ; all things were alike easy to him ; he cured the man that was born blind, as easy as if he had been newly made so. But as the man himself said, *Since the world began, was it not heard, that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind,* John ix. 32. No mere man, be sure, ever did, or could do it ; none but Almighty God himself : but he did it, and by that and all his other works demonstrated himself to be almighty ; that he could do whatsoever he would, which is the great prerogative of God, incommunicable to any creature. Wherefore, as the Samaritans believed in him, because he had told the woman all that she ever did, John iv. 39. and the disciples, because he knew all things, John xvi. how much more cause have we to believe him to be the Almighty God, the great Creator and Governor of the world, seeing he did not only know all things, but could do all things, and alter the course of nature whensoever he pleased ? And therefore upon that account, he might well say, *Though ye believe not me, believe the works, that ye may know and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him ;* or, as it is in my text, *that I and the Father are one.*

Especially if we consider withal, his way and manner of doing these works. When Moses and the prophets undertook any thing extraordinary, being conscious to

themselves that they could not do it of themselves, they prayed to God to do it. But our blessed Saviour, although as being God of God, he sometimes calls God his God ; yet we never find that he prayed to God at all, as such, but only to the Father. For where it is said, according to our translation, that he *continued all night in prayer to God*, Luke vi. 12. in the original it is, ἐν προσευχῇ τοῦ Θεοῦ, in an oratory of God, in a place set apart for prayer. But wheresoever we read that he prayed, we still find that he directed himself to the Father ; as, *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth*, Matt. xi. 25. *Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me*, John xi. 41 *Father, save me from this hour*, chap. xii. 27 *Father, glorify thy name*, ver. 28. *Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me*, Luke xxii. 42. *Father, forgive them*, chap. xxiii. 34. *Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit*, ver. 46. Which last words David directed unto God, Psal. xxxi. 5. but Christ to the Father ; which, doubtless, was done on purpose, to shew the difference betwixt his and others' praying : and that although as he was man, he might pray to God ; yet being himself also God, he prayed only to the Father, from whom he received his essence, and all he had ; and for the same reason, never promiseth his disciples that he will pray to God, but that he will pray to the Father for them, John xiv. 16. xvi. 20. And so he accordingly doth all along in that solemn prayer, John xvii.

But whensoever he undertook any great work, we never find that he prayed to the Father to do it, or to assist him in it ; but he always did it himself, by his own power. He cast out devils by the Spirit, or the finger of God, Matt. xii. 28. Luke xi. 10. that is, by his own Spirit, with his own finger ; for he cast out the spirits with his word, Matt. viii. 16. He only said to the devil, *I charge thee, come out of him*, and he immediately did so, Mark ix. 25. Thus he raised the young man that was dead, by saying, *Young man, I say*

unto thee, *Arise*, Luke vii. 14. and Jairus's daughter, saying, *Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise*, Mark v. 41. Where by saying, *I charge thee*, and, *I say unto thee*, he plainly shewed, that he did it himself, by the power of his own word. Thus he made five loaves and two fishes satisfy five thousand people; he only looked up to heaven, and blessed, and his word did the work, Mark vi. 41. Thus he caused the fig-tree to wither; he only recalled the word, whereby it was first made to increase and fructify, by saying, *Let no fruit grow on thee from henceforward for ever; and the tree presently withered away*, Matt. xxi. 19. Thus he restored the withered hand; he only said to the man, *Stretch forth thine hand; and it was restored whole as the other*, chap. xii. 13. Thus he rebuked the winds and storms at sea, and they obey him. He only said to the sea, *Peace, be still*, and all was hush; *the wind ceased, and there was a great calm*, Mark iv. 39. Thus he cured the man that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; he only touched his ears and tongue, saying, *Ephphatha, be opened; and his ears were opened, and he spake plain*, Mark vii. 34. Thus he raised Lazarus; he only said, *Lazarus, come forth; and he that was dead came forth*, John xi. 43, 44. Thus indeed he did all his works; and therefore I shall instance in no more particulars, but that which gives light to all the rest; when he cured the leper, by saying, *I will; be thou clean*, Matt. viii. 3. For this shews that he could do what he would, only by willing it to be done, and so was truly omnipotent; this being the way whereby God useth to manifest and exert his omnipotence, in doing what he will, only by signifying by his word, that he would have it so. Thus it was that he made all things at first. He only said, *Let there be light, and there was light*, Gen. i. 3. So all his works were then made. And seeing Jesus Christ wrought his works after the same manner, he thereby demonstrated himself to be God;

the same Almighty God that made the world, as plainly as it was possible to be done.

But here I must not omit, that two of his works may seem to be done another way; but I must observe withal, that they were done so on purpose, that he might take the more notice of his divine power in them. One was his curing the man that was born blind: for it is said, that Jesus *spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and anointed the eyes of the blind with the clay, and said, Go, wash, &c.* John ix. 6. Here he used some means, but they were such as could never, of themselves, effect the end, but rather the contrary, as being more likely to put out a man's eyes, than to make him see. But why then did he use them? I doubt not but there was something wanting in this man's eyes from the first; either some of the tunics or humours, or the optic nerves; or something else that was necessary to make them fit organs for the sense of seeing: which our Saviour knowing, and not being willing to create any thing anew, he supplied what was so wanting, as he made man out of the dust of the ground. He took of the dust of the earth, and mingling it with his spittle, he anointed it upon the outside of the man's eyes, and by his almighty word he turned so much of it as was necessary into the substance of that which was wanting, and ordered it into its proper place or places: and then he only bade the man wash the rest off in the pool of Siloam, and he saw perfectly. Which was certainly as great an instance of his divine power, as the formation of Adam out of the dust of the ground was.

The other is much of the same nature, his curing a man that could once see, but was made blind by some distemper or accident, Mark viii. 23. He spat on the man's eyes, for the same reason, doubtless, that he anointed the other's with the clay, because there was something wanting. But here nothing seems to be

wanting but one or more of the three humours, which the spittle, being turned by his word into such humours, might be sufficient to supply. When he had thus spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked the man if he saw ought? Not but that he himself knew, but that the people might know from the man himself, how he now saw; who, looking up, said, *I see men as trees, walking*, ver. 24. He could see already; but every thing was represented to his sight in an inverted order, upside down; men seemed to walk upon their heads, with their legs, or lower parts upwards, like branches of trees. From whence we may infer, that our Lord had now put all things into the man's eyes that should be there. But they were not yet in their right place and order, to shew that he could order every thing, as he did in the creation, when and how he pleased. And if he had pleased, the man's eyes should have always continued so disordered, that every thing should have appeared to him in a posture just contrary to that it was really in. But when our Lord had thus sufficiently manifested that he could do what he would, he only put his hands again upon the man's eyes, and then he saw every man clearly, ver. 25. All which could never have been done by any other power, than that by which the world was at first made.

To these things we might further add, that as our Lord thus cured some by his touching them; so he cured others by their touching him. For *as many as touched him, were made perfectly whole*, Matt. xiv. 36. Mark vi. 56. Matt. ix. 21, 22. And some he cured that were at a great distance from him; as the centurion's servant, Matt. viii. 13. And the nobleman's son, John iv. 50, 51 whereby he plainly discovered, that though the body he had assumed was only in one place, yet his divine essence and power was every where, reaching those which were far off, as well as those which stood just by his body, and touched it. And, by consequence, that he was both omnipotent and omnipresent too,

which none but God ever was, or can be. And therefore, he that was so, must needs be the living and true God.

But that which is most of all to be observed in this case is, that although he saith, that he did his works in his Father's name, John x. 25. that all the glory of them might ultimately redound to him from whom he received that divine power by which he did them ; yet it is never said he did any thing in the name of God, but in his own, to convince us that he had that power inherent in himself, and so was the same God with the Father. For all his commands, and threats, and promises, (such as none could perform but God,) all run in his own name. He never saith, as Moses and the prophets did, *Thus saith the Lord*, but, *Verily, verily, I say unto you*. So he did all his works too in his own name, ascribing the glory of them to himself, which he could never have done, if he had not been that Almighty God by whom they were wrought. Neither did he only act in his own name himself, but he sent forth and empowered his disciples to do so too : and they accordingly did it. For when they came to him again, they said, *Lord, even the devils are subject to us through thy name*, Luke x. 17. Yea, one that did not follow him, yet could cast out devils in his name, Mark ix. 38. And he himself saith, *These signs shall follow them that believe ; In my name they shall cast out devils ; they shall speak with new tongues ; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them : they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover*, Mark xvi. 17, 18. And accordingly St. Peter cured the lame man, by saying, *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk*, Acts iii. 6. And St. Paul cast the devil out of the damsel, by saying to the spirit, *I command thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her*, chap. xvi. 18. But certainly, Christ would never have required his disciples to act in his name, neither could they have performed

such wonderful works by it, if his name had not been the same with the name of God, or if he had not been *one* (as he saith in my text) *with the Father*.

There are many other arguments which God hath laid before us in his holy word, to confirm us in the belief of this great truth, more, I think, than for any other article of our Christian faith. But I have here confined myself to that which he himself refers us to in this place, drawn from the works he did; which I am confident no man can duly lay together, and consider without prejudice, as I have now endeavoured to do, but he must confess that Jesus Christ, who did them, was not a mere man, or any other finite creature, but that he was, and is, the one infinite, eternal, almighty God, of the same wisdom, power, glory, and essence with the Father, the great Creator and Governor of the whole world. For I do not see how it was possible for the most high God to discover himself and his divine perfections to mankind, and so to demonstrate himself to be God more plainly, than Jesus Christ hath done it by the works he wrought, and which he wrought for that very purpose, that we might never doubt, but firmly believe what he here asserts of himself, saying, *I and the Father are one*.

But all the while he did these works, he appeared to be a man, and really was so. It is true, the Word was then made flesh, and dwelt among us: but he was still the Word, the eternal Son of God, the only-begotten of the Father, so begotten of him, as to be one with him, one Jehovah, the Lord; who having, from the beginning of the world, made by him, undertaken the redemption of fallen man, though heaven and earth be full of his glory, yet he was pleased to presentiate himself in a peculiar manner to men, such as were able to bear it: and so to manifest himself, and signify his pleasure to them in their own language. This he did for many ages together, in and by his holy angels. Thus he spake to Abraham, to Jacob, and to Moses in the

bush. For though he that appeared is said to be an angel, he that spake in and by the angel is called Jehovah ; who also wrought many signs and wonders by Moses in Egypt, and the wilderness, for his people ; and that great deliverance, which was a type and figure of that which he designed for all mankind.

And as sometimes before, so especially after this, he usually spake to his people by holy men, which he possessed with his spirit of prophecy : for that it was his Spirit that was in the prophets, we are infallibly assured by his apostle, 1 Pet. i. 11. And therefore not only what they said, but all the wonderful works which are recorded of them, were really done by him, and his Spirit in them. Thus he continued to speak and act in and by other men for many ages together. But when the fulness of time was come, he assumed a body of his own ; for by the mighty operation of his Holy Spirit, overshadowing the blessed Virgin, he formed a body endued with a reasonable soul out of her flesh, (as he formed the first man out of the dust of the earth.) This he took unto himself as his own proper body ; he fixed his divine majesty and presence in it for ever, and possessed it in such an intimate, mysterious, and divine manner, that he thereby took upon him the form of a servant ; he became a real and perfect man, consisting of a reasonable soul and body, as other men do, and so was of the same nature in general that all men are of. But this his human nature having never subsisted out of his divine Person, but being taken into it at its first formation or conception in the womb ; it could not make a person of itself, distinct from that into which it was taken. And therefore although he was now man as well as God, yet as both God and man, he was still but one person, one Christ ; who being thus found in fashion as a man, he, as such, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross ; upon which he offered up the body which he had thus assumed, as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.

But before he did that, he in his said body conversed for some years together among men, and did those many divine works we have spoken of before their eyes, that they and all the world might see and believe, that notwithstanding his outward appearance among them as a man, he was indeed the one living and true God, or as he himself here saith, that *he and the Father are one*.

Now from what ye have heard upon this divine argument, ye may observe, first, how necessary it is for all men to believe that Jesus Christ is God, seeing he was pleased to work so many miracles on purpose that we might believe it. It is indeed the foundation of our whole religion ; and our hopes of pardon and salvation in it depend not only upon the truth itself, but likewise upon our believing it. And therefore, as ever ye desire to be saved, have a care of doubting of it, and of those whom the devil employs to make you do so. To me it seems a great mystery, far greater than any they deny, that there should be any such among us, who profess to believe the Gospel, and yet will not believe that which is so plainly revealed in it. But our Saviour himself hath given us the plain reason of it, a sad one for them, where he saith a little before my text, *But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep*, John x. 26.

From hence we may also observe, what firm ground we have to trust in Christ our Saviour for all things necessary to our salvation, seeing he is one with the Father, the almighty and eternal God. For what cannot he do for us, who can do all things whatsoever he pleaseth ? How well then may we say with David, *The Lord is my light and salvation, whom then shall I fear ?* Psal. xxvii. 1. And with St. Paul, *I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me*, Phil. iv. 13.

Moreover, by this we may see what cause our Saviour had to say, *That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*, John v. 23. seeing he and

the Father are one ; and by consequence, how much we are all bound to do him all the service and honour that we possibly can, by vindicating his divine glory from the blasphemies of those who have the impudence to speak against it ; by taking all occasions to worship him with reverence and godly fear, by observing all things whatsoever he hath commanded, and by walking in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life ; remembering that he himself said, *If any man serve me, him will my Father honour*, John xii. 26.

From hence, lastly, we may learn, what infinite cause we have to praise and magnify the eternal God our Saviour, seeing he is one with the Father, and yet was most graciously pleased to become man, like unto us ; and all to make us like unto himself, partakers of his divine nature and glory. Let us therefore now be glad, and rejoice, and give honour to him. Let his praises be always in our mouths, that we may be always singing *with angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven, Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth, heaven and earth are full of thy glory ; glory be to thee, O Lord, most high. Amen, Amen.*

SERMON XXVI.

THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST

JOHN i. 14.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

THERE are two great works, wherein it pleased the eternal God, in a most wonderful manner, to exert and manifest his divine perfections; the creation of the world, and the redemption of fallen man. Of both which he himself hath given us a full account in his holy word; of the first, in the Old Testament, by his servant Moses; of the other in the New, by four several evangelists, whereof St. John was one. Moses begins the history of the creation with, *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*; and then goes on to shew, how he made all things by his word: *God said, Let there be light, and there was light*, Gen. i. 3. so all his works were made. Much after the same manner St. John begins the history of our redemption, with, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*. And then he goes on to tell us, *that all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made*, John i. 3. And as Moses acquaints us, that the first thing that God formed by his word was light; so St. John assures us, that *in the same Word was life, and the life was the light of men*, ver. 4. and that *this is the*

true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, ver. 9. From whence we may observe, that as God made the world by his Word, so he likewise redeemed mankind by his Word; and that it is only by the same Word, as the true light, whereby men can see the things belonging to God, or to their everlasting peace.

Which that we may the better understand, the evangelist, among other things concerning it, here saith, *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.* In which words is briefly comprehended all that is necessary to be known or believed concerning our Saviour's incarnation. And therefore I shall, by his assistance, endeavour to explain them as they lie in order

First he saith, *The Word was made flesh*; where, by the Word, we are certainly to understand the same Word he speaks of all along before; particularly that of which he saith, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* If he was in the beginning, he was long before he was made flesh. If he was with God, he must needs be a person of himself distinct from God, otherwise he could not be said to be with him: for no person can be said to be with himself. And if he was God, as he is here said to be, he must needs be of one and the same nature or substance with God; for there is but one God. And none can be truly said to be God, as he is here, but he that is that one God, blessed for ever. So that we have here both the personality and the divinity of the Word, as plainly revealed as words can do it. But lest any should mistake or doubt of it, the evangelist, by God's direction, tells us further, that *the same Word was in the beginning with God, and that all things were made by him, and without him was not any one thing* (*οὐδὲ ἓν*) *made that was made.* But if he made all things, so as that there is not so much as one thing made, but what was made by him; he himself be sure

was never made, and therefore must needs be from all eternity, and by necessary consequence, *the one eternal God.*

But he who is here called the Word, in other places of holy Scripture is commonly called the Son of God, and in my text itself, *the only-begotten of the Father.* But why then is he here called the Word? For that, I shall only observe, that he is often called the Word in the Old Testament, as well as the New; both in the sacred writings, and also in the ancient Jewish interpreters of them, in the Targum or Chaldee paraphrase: and that St. John seems to call him by that name, in this place, because he here speaks of him as he was the Maker of all things. For as it is certain, that all things were made by the Word of God; it is as certain, that all things were made by the Son of God, Heb. i. 2. Col. i. 16, 17 From whence it appears, that the Son is the same with the Word of God, and may be properly called, as he is here, by that name. To which we may also add, that as we make known our minds to one another by words; so God hath been pleased to make known himself and his will to us by his Son, Matt. xi. 27. John vi. 46. And upon that account also he may be properly called his Word: as St. John himself seems to intimate; in that having often before called him the Word, soon after my text he saith, *No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him,* ver. 18. For seeing it is by the Son that God the Father is declared or revealed to us, he is properly the Word of God, according to that remarkable passage in Samuel, to this purpose; *For the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh, by the word of the Lord,* 1 Sam. iii. 21 Which must be understood of the Son, by whom alone the Lord is pleased to reveal himself to any of us. From whence, I suppose, it is, that we never find him called the Word, as I remember, but with respect either to the beginning of the creation, when God spake all things

out of nothing ; or else with respect to the revelations which he hath made of himself unto the world.

This the essential Word of God, who in the beginning was with God, and who was God, by whom all things were made, the apostle here saith *was made flesh*. The Word was made flesh, that is, man : for so the word flesh usually signifies in Scripture, and all acknowledge it to do so here. And therefore, when it is said, *the Word was made flesh*, it is the same as if it had been said, the Word was made or became man, a real and true man, consisting of a reasonable soul, and such a body as all other men have, as to all the integral or essential parts of it. So that he was now *the man Christ Jesus*, 1 Tim. ii. 5. But that I may give you what light I can into this great mystery, that ye may see what you ought to believe concerning it, from these words we may here observe ;

First, it is not said, that the Word was turned into flesh, but that he was made flesh : for he did not then cease to be what he was before, but he began to be what before he was not. He was the Word from the beginning, and God from all eternity, and so continues forever. But now he was made flesh, or man too, that is, as St. Paul explains it, *he being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God ; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and was found in fashion as a man*, Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8. He was made man therefore, by taking upon him the likeness, the fashion, the form or nature of man. He did not put off his divine nature, but took the human upon him, and so became man, as well as God : having now the human as well as the divine nature in him ; not blended or confounded together, as if the two natures were now made one, or a third diverse from each of them : but so that they both remain distinct from one another in themselves, although they be so united in him as to make but one person.

I say, one person : for here we must farther observe, that this expression, *the Word was made flesh*, implies, that as the Word was the person that was made flesh ; so when he was made flesh, he was still one and the same person that he was before. For in that he was made flesh, the flesh could have no subsistence out of him, so as to make a person of itself, distinct from his, no more than a body can make a human person without being united to a reasonable soul. But as the reasonable soul and flesh together is one man, so God and man is one Christ ; the Word and the flesh one divine person. So that whatsoever he did or suffered in the flesh, was done and suffered by a divine person. *His blood was the blood of God*, Acts xx. 28. and therefore of infinite value and merit ; and, by consequence, a sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, or *propitiation for the sins of the whole world*, 1 John ii. 2. And he accordingly *gave himself a ransom for all*, 1 Tim. ii. 6.

As appears also from my text itself, where we may again observe, it is said, that *the Word was made flesh* : flesh or man in general, as the word flesh always signifies, when applied to men. It doth not signify any one or more particular man, but mankind in general, the whole human nature ; that which all men are of, that proceed from the first man Adam, in whom it was all contained. And so it is in the Word made flesh, who is therefore called *the last Adam*, 1 Cor. xv. 45. and *the second man*, ver. 47 because next to the first who had the whole manhood in him. Hence it is, that when the Word was made flesh and died in it, *he died for all*, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. and *for every man*, Heb. ii. 9. because he died in that nature which is common to all, and every man alike. So that all and every man may now be saved by him, whom God sent into the world to be made flesh, *that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*, John iii. 16.

But how can these things be ? How is it possible that the Word, the essential Word of God, who himself is

God, should be thus made flesh? That God should become man? or, as St. Paul expresseth it, *God manifested in the flesh?* 1 Tim. iii. 16. To that I answer, that we who know not how our soul and body, spirit and matter are joined together in ourselves, can much less understand how the divine and human nature are united in Christ; and so how the Word was made flesh. All that is necessary for us to know concerning it may be learned from what the holy angel, sent from God, said to the blessed Virgin, of whose substance the Word was made flesh. For when she wondered how that could be, he answered and said unto her, *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God*, Luke i. 35. From whence we learn, that this wonderful work was effected by the immediate power of the Highest, to whom nothing is impossible: that the flesh which the Word assumed, was conceived in the blessed Virgin, by the Holy Ghost himself coming upon her; that what was thus conceived in her, was the holy thing, τὸ ἅγιον. Not only the holy God, nor an holy man only, but the holy thing, made up of both: the Word made flesh, God and man together. And that this holy thing is therefore also called the Son of God; not only therefore, because he was begotten from all eternity of God the Father, (which is here implied;) but therefore also, because he was thus conceived, and born of the Virgin mother. As the first Adam is called the Son of God, because formed immediately by God himself, Luke iii. 38. so the second, the Word made flesh, being made so by the immediate power and Spirit of God, is therefore also the Son of God. And we ought to look upon him as such, in respect of his miraculous conception, as well as in respect of his eternal generation. In both respects he is truly the Son of God; both as he is the Word, and as he is the Word made flesh.

And dwelt among us ; that is the next thing here asserted of the Word : that being made flesh, he dwelt among us. When he had taken our nature upon him, he did not lay it down again, nor go up presently to heaven with it ; but he continued a considerable time upon earth, living among men, and conversing familiarly with several of them ; of which St. John, who wrote this, was one : who therefore saith, *he dwelt among us*, according to our translation of the words.

But the original words, ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, import rather, that he dwelt in us, in our nature : as he is called *Emmanuel, God with us*, God with our nature united to him, Matt. i. 23. so he dwelt in us, in that flesh or nature we are all of ; he dwelt, or, as the word signifies, he pitched his tent or tabernacle in it ; in allusion, I suppose, to that in the law, where he dwelt between the cherubims over the ark, keeping, as it were, his residence there ; which was therefore called *Sechinah*, his habitation, his divine presence, and his glory, because his glory appeared from thence unto the people. But that was his dwelling-place only for a time, where he was also pleased only to presentiate and manifest himself without any union or conjunction with it : whereas he dwelleth in our nature by an hypostatical or personal union with it, such as makes it to be of one and the same person with him : as is implied also, in that he is said to be made flesh. He did not only assume it for a while, nor reside in it as he did over the ark ; but he took it unto himself, so as that he himself was made or became flesh, really and truly man, like unto us in all things, except sin.

This is that which the apostle means, where, speaking of Christ, he saith, *for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*, Col. ii. 9. that is, in him, as man, all the fulness of the Godhead, the whole divine essence and glory, dwelleth, not in a figure, like a shadow, or in appearance only, but in a bodily substantial manner, in his very body : for I look upon this word

bodily as used by the apostle also for explication, to shew that when he said, *that the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth in Christ*, his meaning was, that it dwelleth in his body or flesh; according as he himself elsewhere explains it, saying, *that God was manifest in the flesh*, 1 Tim. iii. 16. Although he was truly man, and while he was upon earth, in all outward appearance, seemed to be no other than an ordinary man, of an earthly body, informed with a reasonable soul, as other men have; yet in that body dwelt the fulness of the Godhead, the whole divine essence being fixed in it, and united to it, in such a wonderful and divine manner, that he was, and is also truly God manifest in the flesh, the one living and true God, the Creator and Governor of all things, *Jehovah, the Lord, the Lord God, gracious and merciful, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth*, Exod. xxxiv. 6. or, as it is expressed in my text, *full of grace and truth*. Of which inore presently.

In the mean while we must observe, that the evangelist having said, *that the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us*, he adds, *and we saw his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father*: for this evangelist was one of the three that saw his glory at his transfiguration, *when his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light*, Matt. xvii. 2. And there was a voice which said, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*, ver. 5. Then, as another of the three that were there saith, *they were eyewitnesses of his majesty; for he received from God the Father honour and glory*, when the aforesaid voice came to him from the excellent glory, 2 Pet. i. 16, 17. They then saw his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of or from the Father, when the Father so solemnly declared him to be his beloved Son. All his disciples also, and St. John among the rest, saw his glory, in the wonderful and glorious works that he did in their sight; whereby, as this evangelist saith, *he ma-*

nifested forth his glory, John ii. 11. And that this also was the glory, as of the only-begotten of the Father, appears, in that he himself appealed to the works he did, as an undeniable argument that he was the Son of God, John x. 36, 38. and that too in such a sense, that he then said, *I and the Father are one*, ver. 30. Whereby he plainly signified, that he is so begotten of the Father, as to be of one substance with him. Wherefore, although, as I observed before, he is therefore also called the Son of God, because he is the Word, made flesh by the operation of God the Spirit; yet, in that sense, he never is, nor can be truly called the only-begotten of the Father: for as such, he was from all eternity.

And therefore, when he came into the world to be incarnate, or made flesh, he himself saith, *that God gave his only-begotten Son*, John iii. 16. to shew, that he was not only begotten of him before, but that he was his only-begotten Son, such as none but himself ever was, or can be; as appeared also from his glory which the disciples saw, such glory as was proper and peculiar to the only-begotten from the Father

But these words, according as the construction in the original requires, are included in a parenthesis, and so may be left out without any prejudice to the sense of what went before, and follows after them; which then will run thus, *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth*: whereby we are given to understand, that all the grace and truth which God is pleased to shew to mankind, is in his Word made flesh; in his Son, as he is both God and man, in one person: as such, he is full of grace and truth; and of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace, as the evangelist here acquaints us, ver. 16. and then gives us the reason of it, saying, *For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*, ver. 17. Here the Word, as made flesh, is called Jesus Christ, because he thereby became Jesus; that is, the

Saviour of mankind, the only Mediator between God and men ; and Christ the anointed, as being anointed into that great office by the Spirit of God. By him therefore came both grace and truth into the world : he is full of both in himself, and both came by him ; ἐγένετο, it was made, or had its being or existence, as to us, only by him : for without him, God would neither have shewn us any grace or favour, nor have made us any promise of it, wherein his truth could have appeared to us. And so neither his grace, nor his truth, would ever have been manifested to us, unless his Word had been made flesh, and dwelt among us.

Whereas the Word being made flesh, and having in that been obedient to death, even the death of the cross, God in him, and for his sake, hath promised us all the favours and mercies that we can ever want or desire, and continually shews forth his truth in the performances of his said promises to all that believe and trust in him for it. So that as he came into the world full of grace and truth, grace and truth comes to us only by him. But by him we may all have whatsoever we can have occasion for, either in this world or the next. By him we may have grace truly to repent of all our former sins, so as to forsake and avoid them for the future. By him we may be discharged and absolved from all the offences that we ever committed against God, so as never to suffer any of the punishments that are due unto us for them. By him we may be as perfectly reconciled to the Almighty Creator of the world, as if we had never done any thing to displease him. By him we may be justified, or accounted righteous in the sight of God, notwithstanding the manifold imperfections that he seeth in us. By him we may be continually enlightened, directed, influenced, excited, and assisted in our whole duty by his Holy Spirit, so as to say as truly as St. Paul did, *I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me*, Phil. iv 13. By him we may be preserved or delivered from all evil, and obtain what-

soever we ask in his name that is good for us, through the whole course of our lives : and when we die, by him may go to heaven, and there live for ever with him and his holy angels, in the full possession and enjoyment of all things that were ever made, and of him too that made them. All this, and infinitely more than I am able to express, we may all have if we will, and it is our own faults if we have it not, by *the Word that was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.*

When I seriously consider these things, I am astonished and confounded at them. Oh the mystery of godliness ! God manifest in the flesh ' Oh the height, the depth, the length, the breadth of the love of God to mankind, that he should give his Word, his Son, his only-begotten Son, to be made flesh, and all that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life ! That the eternal Son of God, whom the heaven of heavens is not able to contain, should come down and dwell among us poor mortals upon earth, and all that we might live with him in heaven ! That he who is full of grace and truth in himself, should communicate it so freely to us, that of his fulness we may all receive, and grace for grace, even all things necessary to make us holy and happy both now and for ever !

What shall we say to these things ? Where shall we find words to express the thanks that are due for them ? What shall we do for him, that hath done all this for us ? All that we can do, is only to receive the grace, and believe the truth that he hath manifested to us, and to praise and thank him for it. Let us therefore now rejoice and be glad, and give honour unto God ; for the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. The eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ, came into this lower world : he came to save sinners, such as we all are. He came to wash us from our sins in his own blood, and to make us kings and priests unto God and his

Father, Rev. i. 5, 6. *He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many*, Matt. xx. 28. *He came to be made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*, 2 Cor. v. 21. *He came to bless us, by turning every one of us from his iniquities*, Acts iii. 26. *He came to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*, Tit. ii. 14. He came to earth, that we might go to heaven, and there be happy for ever. O therefore that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders that he doth for the children of men !

What shall we render unto the Lord for this his wonderful benefit ! We will receive the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. We will celebrate the memory of the Word made flesh, by feeding upon that spiritual food which the Word hath prepared for us, of the flesh he was made. We will go to his altar, and there offer up our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to him : and will sing with the holy angel, *Glory be to God in the highest, in earth peace, good-will towards men. Hallelujah.*

SERMON XXVII.

CHRIST THE ONLY SAVIOUR.

ACTS iv. 12.

Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

WHEN it pleased Almighty God to create the world, and all things in it, he was pleased to do it by his word; he said, *Let there be light, and there was light*, Gen. i. 3. Thus the whole work was finished: as David observes, *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth*, Psal. xxxiii. 6. And St. Peter, *By the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water, and in the water*, 2 Pet. iii. 5. By that eternal Word, who, subsisting from all eternity in the form of God, at the beginning of time exerted his divine power, in the production of all things out of nothing. For *in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.* This we are assured of by St. John, in the beginning of his Gospel, where he also tells us soon after, that this *Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us*, ver. 14. that is, he took on him the *form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men*, as St. Paul expresseth it, Phil. ii. 7. And then he was

called Jesus, the Saviour, as being the only Saviour of men, whose form and nature he for that purpose had so assumed. So that we can now be saved only by him, by whom we were at first created. For that this Jesus, called also the Christ, is that Word of God, by whom all things were made, appears not only from the Gospel of St. John, before quoted, but likewise from the apostolical epistles, when it is said, that *God created all things by Jesus Christ*, Eph. iii. 9. *Whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds*, Heb. i. 2. And especially from that remarkable place, where the apostle, speaking of Jesus Christ, ascribes our redemption and creation to him both together; saying, *In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins; who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: for by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist*, Col. i. 14, 15, 16, 17. And that this glorious and almighty Creator of all things is not only our Saviour, but the only Saviour that we have in all the world, is positively asserted by St. Peter, in my text, where, speaking of Jesus Christ, he saith, *Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*.

Which words are so plain, that I cannot but wonder how any who profess to believe the holy Scriptures, can doubt of the great truth revealed in them. And yet there have been, and still are, some who have the confidence to affirm, that there are other ways besides Jesus Christ, whereby men may be saved: at least such as never heard of him, nor have had his Gospel made known unto them, they may notwithstanding be saved, as these people think, if they do but live up to the light

and knowledge which they have, and according to the rules of that sect or persuasion they are of, be it what it will. But this is a great and dangerous mistake, if not one of those damnable heresies which St. Peter foretold should be privily brought into the church, 2 Pet. i. 2. Be sure it is severely condemned by our church in her Articles, where she hath declared herself against it in these words, “ They also are to be accursed, that “ presume to say, that every man shall be saved by the “ law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent “ to frame his life according to that law, and the light of “ nature: for holy Scripture doth set out unto us only “ the name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be “ saved.” Article XVIII.

In which Article here are two things much to be observed. The first is, that this is the only Article wherein the church expressly denounceth a curse or anathema. I say expressly, because it is said, “ they also are to be accursed,” and in the Latin, *Sunt et illi anathematizandi*; where the particle *et*, *also*, seems to imply, that the curse is to be referred to all the foregoing Articles: so that whosoever contradict or oppose the doctrine established in any of them, as well as this, are to be also accursed. But howsoever, this is the only Article of all the XXXIX, in which the anathema is expressed; whereby our church hath declared her utter abhorrence and detestation of the opinion she here condemns, in a more particular manner, and hath taken special care that none of her members should be infected with it. For having denounced this curse upon all that presumed to hold it, she afterwards required, and still doth, that all who are admitted to holy orders, or into any cure of souls, shall subscribe, and within two months after induction, publicly in the presence of God, and of the congregation, where they are to minister the word, declare their assent to this among her other Articles; and so to their own curse, if they shall presume to say, either publicly or privately, that every man shall be

saved by the law or sect which he professeth, if he be diligent to frame his life according to that law and the light of nature : or, as it is expressed in the title of the Article, that eternal salvation may be obtained any other way than by the name of Christ. And whatsoever some may think, I am sure it is no light matter to fall under the curse of the whole Church of England in any thing, especially in this, wherein she doth no more that what the apostle in effect did before ; where he saith. *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha*, 1 Cor xvi. 22. that is, let him not only be Anathema, accursed in general, but let him be accursed in the highest manner that can be ; let that curse come upon him, which in Syriac is called ܡܪܢܐ ܐܬܗܐ *Maran atha*, in Hebrew אַתָּה ־ שֵׁמָתָה *Shematha*, by contraction, שְׁמַתָּה, *Shammatta*, the Lord cometh ; whereby a man was utterly cast out of God's church, never to be restored, but wholly left to the judgment of the great day, when the Lord cometh to pass an irrevocable sentence upon all men. This is that curse which the apostle, by God's own direction, here denounceth against all that love not the Lord Jesus Christ : but they who think that a man may be saved without him, can never have that love for him, which is due to the only Saviour of the world ; and therefore are subject to this curse also. How they can stave it off, I know not ; let them look to that.

The other thing to be observed in the aforesaid Article of our church is, that she grounds it upon the words of my text, giving this as the reason of it, "because holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved : " not but that the same thing may be proved from many other places of holy Scripture, but because this is so clear and full to the purpose, that he who doth not wilfully shut his eyes, cannot but see it here. For St. Peter and St. John having restored a lame man to his perfect health, only by saying, *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth*,

rise up and walk ; and being afterwards examined by the rulers of the Jews, by what power they had done it, St. Peter, full of the Holy Ghost, tells them boldly, That it was done in the name of Jesus Christ, whom they had crucified, and whom God had raised from the dead. And that this, this Jesus, is the stone the prophet speaks of, which was set at nought by these builders, which is now become the head of the corner. And then he adds, Neither is there salvation in any other ; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved : there is none other name, that is, there is no person, no way, no thing, that is or can be named under heaven, given or granted by Almighty God to men, whereby they must be saved, if they ever be at all, but only the name of Jesus Christ.

In which words, I do not see how any thing can be doubted of, except it be the true sense of the word salvation, or what the apostle means here, by being saved? For salvation is a word that hath various significations in holy Scripture ; sometimes it is used for deliverance from temporal troubles ; sometimes for safety and protection from them ; sometimes for grace, to eschew evil and do good ; sometimes for the remission of sins, and reconciliation unto God ; sometimes for eternal life and happiness in the other world. Now the question is, in what sense the word is to be understood in my text? I answer, in all senses : all sorts of salvation are here signified by it ; for the apostle here speaks indefinitely, There is no salvation in any other but in Christ : no name whereby we can be any way saved but his ; he is the only Saviour of mankind in all respects. Whatsoever evil any of us are saved from, whatsoever good we enjoy, it must be wholly and solely ascribed to Jesus Christ ; without whom we should never have received any favour or mercy at the hands of God, no more than the apostate angels do ; they are his creatures as well as we. But God never extended any mercy towards them, but hath reserved them in everlasting chains under

darkness, unto the judgment of the great day ; because they never had a Saviour to save them from his wrath and just indignation against them : and our condition would have been every way as bad as theirs, if we had not had a Saviour, and such a Saviour as Jesus Christ ; who is able to save us, not only from temporal, but from spiritual and eternal miseries, and to advance us to the highest degree of glory and happiness in the other world ; and therefore he is called *the Captain of our salvation*, Heb. ii. 10. and *the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him*, chap. v. 9. And in this sense especially it is, that the words of my text are to be understood, *There is no salvation*, there is no attaining everlasting happiness, but by Christ ; *for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we can be saved*, so as to enjoy the love and favour of God for ever.

But here we must observe, that when the apostle speaks of eternal salvation as attainable by Jesus Christ, he is not to be so understood, as if Christ brought any man to heaven *per saltum*, without first leading him in the way thither ; for the salvation here spoken of begins in this life : Christ first saves us from our sins, both from the guilt and from the power of all manner of sins. He gives us repentance, and faith, and grace, to love, and serve, and honour God truly and faithfully in our generation ; he applies the merits of his death to us, for the pardon of our sins, and that God may be reconciled to us : he makes us pure, and humble, and holy, every way meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light ; and then, and not till then, he brings us to it. So that the whole of our salvation from first to last is begun, continued, and perfected only by him ; none of us being able to do any thing towards it to any purpose, much less attain the end of our faith, even the eternal salvation of our souls, without him.

He that really believes the words of my text, will need no other arguments to convince him of this great truth,

so clearly revealed in them. Yet, howsoever, that we may be able to form a clear idea of it in our minds, and also be more firmly established in our belief of it, it may not be amiss to call to mind some of the many other arguments which may be produced for it. For which purpose, we may first observe in general, that there are two things absolutely necessary to any man's attaining everlasting happiness or salvation in the other world. First, it is necessary that his mind be at least in some degree inclined to God, and disposed to virtue and goodness, so as to live, for the main, soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; for it is certain, that without *holiness no man shall see the Lord*, Heb. xii. 14. nor indeed is capable of enjoying him, the chiefest good, in which all our happiness doth chiefly consist. And then it is necessary also, that all the sins and failures that he hath been guilty of be pardoned, that so God may be reconciled to him, and accept of him, as a righteous and a good man, fit to live with him, and to enjoy him for ever. For so long as God is angry and displeased with a man, it is impossible that man should be happy, as might easily be demonstrated. But I may well take these things for granted, they being so plain and evident at first sight, that there is no controversy or dispute among us about them.

Let us therefore now lay aside our prejudices, and impartially consider, how far men can of themselves go in these ways that lead to salvation, and we shall find, they cannot so much as make one true step towards them, without Christ. For, first, men by nature, as it is now corrupted, have no true knowledge of God, nor yet of virtue and vice; what they ought, and what they ought not to do, in order to their being saved. I know, there are some general notions of these things in all, or most men, but they are so weak and confused, that they have no influence at all upon their minds; and when they come to be applied to particular cases, they are generally mistaken, virtue for vice, and vice for virtue:

as we see in the ancient inhabitants of America, before the Christians came among them ; though they had some notions of a God among them, yet they knew nothing of him, who, or what he was ; some taking one thing, others another for him, but none the right ; neither did they perform any kind of religious worship to any thing, except it was to the sun, or the devil : and though they believed the immortality of the soul, that after death the virtuous lived in fine gardens, and the vicious in torments ; yet they were so far from understanding the true nature of virtue and vice, that the most vicious wretches in the world were reckoned by them to be the most virtuous, even such as had taken most of their enemies captives, and had afterwards in cold blood killed and eaten them ; as one (Johannes Lerius), who conversed a great while with those who lived upon the coast of Brazil, assures us upon his own knowledge. Now, what could such people as these do towards their salvation ? The more they lived according to their law, and the light of nature which they had, the worse they were. And so were anciently the greatest part of mankind, in Europe, Asia, and Africa, as well as in America ; I may too truly say all, except those which lived near to that part of Asia where Christ all along had his church and people, to whom he revealed the will of God, what he would, and what he would not have them do : whereby the true knowledge of God, and of their duty to him, was constantly kept up among them, and in some measure was imparted by them to the people that lived about them, and frequently conversed with them ; especially the Egyptians on the one hand, and the Phœnicians on the other ; from whom the Greeks afterwards received it, as they did, by their own confession, their learning, and their very letters too, as the Romans did from them : to which the Israelites abode in Egypt for two hundred and fifteen years together, and their several captivities and dispersions afterwards, contributed very much ; and they seem to be

designed by God for this very purpose. For by this means, some of God's own people being scattered among all the nations thereabouts, and often speaking, as doubtless they did, of the God they worshipped, and of the excellent laws which he had given them; others took occasion from thence to look a little more narrowly into these things, and finding them very agreeable to something within themselves, which they had taken no notice of before, they began to think and talk a little more consistently about God, and also about good and evil, virtue and vice, than they had hitherto done. The natural notions of these things, which at first were implanted, but were now almost quite stifled in them, beginning by this means to revive a little, and shew forth themselves again; especially the Greeks first, and then the Latins, improved these hints so far, that some of them could discern pretty well between what they ought, and what they ought not to do. But whatsoever knowledge they had of these things, came either immediately, or else mediately from the Jews; and therefore we find very little, if any thing at all of it, till after the ten tribes were carried out of their own, and dispersed in other countries; nor in any places but those which were either so themselves, or else were frequented by persons that came from such places as were near to Judea. For those which were furthest off from thence on all sides, as the north of Europe, the north and east of Asia, the south and west of Africa, and all America, were overspread with gross ignorance and barbarity; which to me seems plainly to argue, that all the knowledge which the ancient heathens had of religion and morality, came first from the Jews, as theirs did from Christ; who intending to be born into the world of their stock, in all ages sent prophets among them, to instruct them in it: for that it was the Spirit of Christ which was in the prophets, and by which they spake, is evident from many places of holy writ, and particularly from that of St. Peter, where he saith, *Of which salva-*

tion the prophets have enquired, and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace which should come unto you ; searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify, 1 Pet. i. 10, 11 From all which it appears, that mankind in general are so far from being able to attain salvation without Christ, that without him they had never so much as known any thing that was necessary to be done in order to it.

And if we cannot know, much less can we do any such thing as we ought without him. I know some have highly extolled and magnified the powers and faculties of man, as if we were able to do great things of ourselves, when God knows that we are *not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves*, 2 Cor. iii. 5. *But every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually*, Gen. vi. 5. And therefore they who boast so much of their strength, do but betray their own weakness by it ; as might be shewn in many respects ; but it appears sufficiently in this, that they take the height of man's power by nature, from that which they themselves have by Christ. For they living under the light of the Gospel, which hath always something of heat attending it, are able thereby to understand and do some things that seem to be very good. And from thence they conclude, that they or any other may do so by their own natural strength without Christ ; which is not only a great mistake, but an horrid abuse of the grace which Christ hath given them : for he gave it that they might serve and honour him with it, whereas they employ it against him, by making themselves and others, if they could, believe that they are not beholden unto him for it.

But if they would give us a true description of men's natural strength to avoid evil, or do good, they should go into those parts of Africa or America, where men never yet heard either of God's law or gospel ; or else have quite forgotten it, and therefore live in the true state of

nature. Or if they be loth to travel so far, let them but read the many impartial relations that have been made of those parts, when they were first discovered; and then let them tell us what mighty things men can do by their own natural powers. They will find many of those people as ingenious and cunning as themselves, but it is only to do mischief, to destroy and devour one another, which they reckon to be a great virtue: but whether it be or no, I leave it to our Socinian and Pelagian philosophers to dispute the case with them.

But they will say, perhaps, although these were such brutish and savage people, that there was no shadow of any true virtue among them; yet there have been other heathens, as the Platonists, the Peripatetics, and several of the old philosophers, who have discoursed very well of religion and virtue. It is true, they did so. But, as I have shewn already, they received the first intimations of these things from Christ himself, by his people the Jews which lived near them, and some among them; otherwise I doubt not but they would have been as much in the dark about such things as the Tartarians, Africans, and Americans are at this day. And besides, all their discourses of this nature were confined to some particular virtues, which were most obvious and apparent to men, with the total neglect, if not contempt, of such as had an immediate respect to the true God, and of many others that were as necessary to qualify a man for heaven. And these they did talk of, they only talked of them: we do not find that any ever practised them all, nor indeed any one of them, so as that it might be truly termed a virtue, Rom. i. 21. But after all their talk, their very virtues, as they managed them, were but as so many vices; and the good works they seemed to do were done so ill, that they were neither pleasing unto God, nor any way profitable to their own salvation: but rather have the nature of sin, as our church hath declared of all manner of works, done by any person

whatsoever, without or before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Holy Spirit ; Article XIII.

And verily, whatsoever proud and groundless conceits some men have of their own gifts, and parts, and power, to do good, I am sure they have none without Christ. For Christ himself hath told us so, saying, with his own mouth, *Without me ye can do nothing*, John xv 5. And by his Holy Spirit, saying, *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God*, 1 John v. 5. From whence it is as plain as words can make it, that neither Pagan, nor Jew, nor Turk, nor Christian, no person whatsoever can overcome the world, so as to live soberly, righteously, and godly in it, but only by Jesus Christ ; nor by him neither, unless he believe him to be the Son of God, in that sense wherein he is declared to be so in the holy Scriptures, even of the same nature or substance with the Father ; which St. Paul was so sensible of, that he ascribes all the ability he had of doing any thing that was truly good and virtuous, wholly to Christ, saying, *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*, Phil. iv. 13. From which, and many such-like places of holy Scripture, which might be produced, we may infallibly conclude, that there is none other name given among men, whereby they can do any thing towards their salvation, but the name of Christ.

But what if it were possible, as it is not, for a man to do some good works by his own strength without Christ ; doth it thence follow, that he can be saved without him ? By no means. For whatsoever good works a man may be supposed to do, it must be granted, that he doth, or hath done, some that are really ill and sinful. This all must acknowledge, that believe either God's word, or their own experience. But how then shall a man be freed from the guilt he hath contracted, and from the punishments he hath deserved by his sins ? Can he be freed by the good works he is supposed to have

done? No, surely. When he hath done all he can, he is still but an unprofitable servant, he hath done no more than what was his duty to do, and therefore cannot possibly merit any thing at all by it, much less so great a favour, as to have his sins pardoned, and so his obligations to punishment for them cancelled and made void. Neither hath he any ground to expect such a mercy at the hands of God without Christ: for we do not find that God was ever merciful to any of his creatures, but only to those for which Christ died. And therefore may be certain, that his mercy in the pardon of men's sins, is never shewn but only for the sake and upon the account of that death, whereby Christ made complete satisfaction to his truth and justice for them.

But this is a point that deserves to be a little more cleared; for which end, I shall not insist upon God's vindictive justice, or whether he can in justice pardon any sins, without having satisfaction made unto him for them. For justice, as it is in God, being an infinite perfection, we are not so well able to comprehend it: neither is it the question, whether God can do it if he will; but whether he will do it, though he can. And therefore I shall rather, at present, choose to explain this great doctrine by God's veracity, or faithfulness to his word. For all agree, that he cannot lie; but whatsoever he saith shall be, shall certainly be as he saith it: so that his word must always stand, and be made good. Now if we consult his holy word, wherein he hath revealed his divine will and pleasure to us, we shall find that he hath often said, that all who transgress his laws, shall be punished for it. One of the first things he said to man was, *that in the day he eat of the forbidden fruit, he should surely die*, Gen. ii. 17. Whereby he plainly signified it to be his will, that every sin should be punished with death. And he hath frequently repeated the same in other terms by his prophets. But at present I shall mention only his saying, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are*

written in the book of the law, to do them, Gal. iii. 10. Deut. xxvii. 26. They who are cursed by God, are ipso facto under his displeasure, and condemned to die, and suffer all the punishments that he can inflict upon them. But here we see that every one that doth not do every thing which he hath commanded, is thus cursed by God himself. And it being impossible for God to lie, Heb. vi. 18. it is likewise impossible but this curse should take effect, and be executed upon all mankind, because all have sinned, and are guilty before God; and are therefore, in express terms, cursed by him.

Now how is it possible for any of us ever to avoid this curse, or have it taken off from us? No way certainly, but by Christ; nor by him, unless he hath borne it for us. But, as the apostle there saith, *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree, Gal. iii. 13.* Christ, the eternal Son of God, having taken upon him the whole nature of man, and so sustaining the person of every one that is of that nature; *he, in it, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man, Heb. ii. 9.* even the cursed death of the cross: and so was made a curse for us, or in our stead, suffering that curse in our nature, which we must otherwise have suffered every man in his own person, *whereby, as the apostle here saith, he hath redeemed us from the curse of the law:* for, by this means, the curse which was denounced in the law against all the transgressors of it, was executed upon us all in our common head and representative, and in our very nature too, united to a divine person: so that God's word is now fulfilled and satisfied. And we may freely, without any violation of his word, remit that curse which he had threatened against us, and instead thereof confer all manner of blessings upon us, for his Son's sake, in whom, and in whom alone, he himself hath also said, *that all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, Gen. xii. 3. xviii. 18. xxii. 18.* By him therefore we

may be saved from all the curses of the law, notwithstanding that God himself hath threatened them. But we never heard of, nor can imagine, any other way whereby it is possible to be done, without plain contradiction to the word of God: and therefore may conclude, that as God's word is true, *there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, but only the name Jesus Christ.*

But to put the whole matter out of dispute, let us briefly consider St. Paul's case, both as he was a Jew, and as he was a Christian; as he was out of Christ, and as he was in him. As a Jew, he was born and bred in that religion which God himself had revealed and settled in the world. He was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, one of the most eminent rabbies the Jews ever had, Acts xxii. 3. He was taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was as zealous towards God as any man, *ibid.* He lived after the strictest sect in that religion, a Pharisee, chap. xxvi. 5. He profited in the Jews' religion, above many of his equals in his own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his fathers, Gal. i. 14. He could truly say, *I have lived in all good conscience towards God until this day*, Acts xxiii. 1. He could and did assert, when inspired by God himself, that he had more ground to trust in the flesh, or Jewish religion, than any other: *If any other man, saith he, thinketh that he hath whereof he may trust in the flesh, I more; circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless*, Phil. iii. 2, 3, 4. Where shall we find a man out of Christ, that ever went farther than this in religion and morality? No where certainly upon the face of the earth: and yet this was St. Paul's case in the Jewish religion. And if any mortal man could have been saved without Christ, it cannot be

doubted but he might ; and so questionless he himself thought, so long as he continued in that religion. But did he think so afterwards, when he was enlightened, and directed by God's Holy Spirit what to think and say ? So far from that, that he had no sooner said these great things of himself, but he immediately adds, *But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord : for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith,* Phil. iii. 7, 8, 9. Where we see how, notwithstanding the great advantages he had, and the extraordinary proficiencies he had made in the Jewish religion, he slights them all as nothing worth, nor contributing any thing at all towards his justification without Christ : no, not although as touching the righteousness which is in the law, the whole Mosaic law, both moral and ceremonial, he was blameless. As he saith in another place, *I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified,* 1 Cor. iv. 4. Though he was not conscious to himself of any one wilful sin, yet he doth not look upon himself as thereby justified ; nay, he positively saith, he was not. And therefore he here most earnestly desires, above all things in the world, to be found in Christ, *not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.* And if this be not another righteousness from that which is of the law, if it be not the righteousness of God himself, and not of a mere man, if it be not made ours by faith in Christ, if it be not the only righteousness whereby we can be justified or accounted righteous before God, according to the doctrine of our church, and, by consequence, if there be any other way whereby it is possible for us to be jus-

tified or saved, but only by Jesus Christ ; I do not see what sense can be put upon the words, without wresting them to our own destruction.

And indeed, if they who presume to affirm, and that too from holy Scripture, that a man may be saved in any religion, without faith in Christ, if they do not wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction, for my part I know not who can. For there is no heresy can be more destructive to men's souls, or more repugnant to the whole design of the Gospel, than this is : for, to what purpose did *Jesus Christ come into the world to save sinners*, 1 Tim. i. 10. if sinners could be saved without him ? To what purpose did *God give his Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*, John iii. 16. if any man may have everlasting life without believing in him ? To what purpose did he give *himself a ransom for all*, 1 Tim. ii. 6. if there be any that have no occasion for it ? To what purpose was he *delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification*, if we could be justified from our offences, whether he had been ever raised again or no ? Rom. iv 25. To what purpose did he require, *that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations*, if people of any nation might repent, and be pardoned by any other name as well as his ? Luke xxiv. 47 To what purpose doth *he now appear in the presence of God*, and there make intercession for us, if our salvation doth not depend upon it ? Heb. ix. 24. To what purpose was the Gospel written, was it not, *that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing we might have life through his name ?* John xx. 13. Doth not Christ himself say, *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me*, John xv. 4. Doth not he say, *I am the way, the truth, and the life ; no man cometh to the Father but by me*, chap. xiv. 6. Doth not he say, *He that believeth on him is*

not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God, chap. iii. 18. Doth not he say, He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned, Mark xvi. 16. What can be the meaning of these, and many such expressions scattered all over the Bible, if there be any other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, but the name of Christ?

And yet it is strange! There are some who would wrest the Scriptures so far, as to make them prove the contrary too; especially that place, where St. Peter saith, *Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him, Acts x. 34, 35.* But this serves only to shew, that when men have espoused an error, they will catch at any text to maintain it by itself, without considering the context and design of the place. If they had done that, they would have seen, that this is so far from supporting, that it quite overthrows their opinion. The case, in short, is this: St. Peter being admonished by a vision to go to Cornelius, though a Gentile; he being sent for, accordingly went: being come to him, Cornelius tells him, *that he was commanded by an angel to send for him, to know of him what he ought to do. Now therefore, saith he, we are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.* St. Peter hearing this, opened his mouth, and said, *Of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons;* that is, I see now that the Gentiles must be brought into the church of Christ, as well as the Jews: and then adds, *but in every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.* He doth not say, such a one shall be thereby saved; but only that he is accepted with God, so as that he may be admitted into the church of Christ, to be saved by

him. Cornelius was doubtless as devout a Gentile as ever lived, yet it seems he could not be saved without the knowledge of Christ : if he could, what need all this stir about it ? Why must an angel be sent to him, and St. Peter warned by a vision, and by the Spirit, to go to him, and all to get him into the church of Christ, if after all he might have been saved as well without it ? Certainly, if there was no other in all the Bible, this one place is sufficient of itself to demonstrate, that no man ever was or can be saved without Christ, how devout or pious soever he may seem to be.

But is it not a sad thing, say they, that so many millions of people, who never heard of Christ, should be damned, notwithstanding they live according to the law and light they have ? I answer ; Was it not a sadder thing, that the whole world should be destroyed, men, women, and children too, that never committed any actual sin, that all should be swept away with the flood, but only eight persons that were saved in the ark, the type of the church of Christ ? Is it not a much sadder thing, that the innumerable company of angels that kept not their first estate, should be all reserved in everlasting chains for the judgment of the great day, and not so much as any one saved ? Is it not the saddest thing of all, that men should talk at this rate against their Saviour, that he might have spared all his pains, for they could have been saved well enough without him, or ever hearing of him ? Is this the recompence we give him for all his love and kindness to us ? *Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God ? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus ? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour ?* Rom. ix. 20, 21. May not God do what he will with his own ? Is it not enough for us, that he hath made known the way of salvation unto us ; but we must needs be quarrelling, that others may not be

saved as well as we? If he hath a mind to save any man, he can bring him, as he did Cornelius, to the knowledge of our Saviour, when he pleaseth; yea, he can send the light of the Gospel into all the corners of the earth, whensoever he sees good, and we have ground to hope that he will ere long.

In the mean while, let us therefore all take heed lest we neglect so great salvation, which is revealed and offered to us by Jesus Christ. Let us look upon him as our only Saviour, and believe and trust in him only for all things necessary to our salvation; not only for the pardon of our sins, and to bring us to heaven when we die, but to lead us in the way thither all the while we live: *to open our eyes, and to turn us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that we may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith that is in him*, Acts xxvi. 18. For which purpose we must be constant, hearty, and sincere in the use of all the means which he hath appointed for our obtaining grace and salvation by him. We must pray without ceasing, both in public and private. We must read and hear his most holy word, that we may know what he would have us to believe and do; and strive all we can, by his assistance, to believe and do accordingly. We must let slip no opportunities we can get of receiving that blessed sacrament, which he ordained in memory of that great sacrifice, which he offered for the sins of the world, and for ours among the rest. And in the use of all these means we must keep our faith always fixed upon him, to make them effectual, *that we may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of him our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, 2 Pet. iii. 18. *still pressing towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in him*, Phil. iii. 14.

These things all must do, that design in good earnest to be saved by Christ. But as for those whom he sends to administer his word and sacraments, for the salvation

of other men, they must likewise do all they can to make him known in the world ; and especially to those whom he hath for that purpose committed to their care. His great apostle determined to know nothing among the Corinthians, but *Jesus Christ, and him crucified*, 1 Cor. ii. 2. And *the same necessity is laid upon us too, and woe to us if we preach not the Gospel*, 1 Cor. ix. 16. If we preach not the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that people may know him, and the divinity of his person, the mystery of his incarnation, the perfect innocence and holiness of his life, the infinite merits of his death, the power of his resurrection, his glorious ascension and exaltation at the right-hand of God, and the continual intercession which he there makes for us. For unless people know these and the like fundamental articles of our faith, as they are revealed to us in the Gospel of Christ, they can never apply themselves to him, nor believe as they ought in him for their salvation : and so will perish everlastingly through our default, for which we must answer severely another day. For when we have preached and they have done all they can, it is only by Jesus Christ they can ever be saved.

But by him, blessed be God for it, we may be all saved : as we have no other, we need no other Saviour besides him ; *for he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them*, Heb. vii. 25. He saves none but those who come to God by him ; but he is able to save them to the uttermost, so as to do every thing for them, and in them, that can be any way requisite to his saving them, all of them, how many soever they be, and how much soever is to be done for them, that they may be saved ; for he is almighty to save. And therefore if any be not saved, it is not for want of power in him, but the fault is wholly in themselves ; they will not come to God by him, they will not mind their salvation at all, or they will look for it some other way, or else they will not trust wholly

unto him for it, and then it is no wonder they go without it.

But let others do what they will, and save themselves if they can ; let us adore and praise the most high God our Maker, that he himself hath been pleased to become our Saviour too ; yea, our very salvation, Luke ii. 30. So the prophet calls him, *Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh ; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him*, Isa. lxii. 11 And again, *Behold, God is my salvation ; I will trust, and not be afraid : for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song ; he also is become my salvation*, Isa. xii. 2. Moses and David had both sung the same thing before in the same words, Exod. xv. 2. Psal. cxviii. 14. And they all agree in saying, *He is become my salvation*, or for salvation unto me ; to shew that he is not our salvation, as he is strength and perfection in his own nature, but in ours, which he took upon him, and so became salvation to us. Which is such an unspeakable, such an inestimable expression of his divine love and goodness, that we can never sufficiently extol and admire it as we ought ; and therefore should be always doing it as well as we can, by ascribing the glory of our salvation entirely unto God, rejoicing in him, trusting on him, and giving thanks continually unto him, and unto him alone for it ; singing with the blessed Virgin, *My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour*, Luke i. 46, 47 And with the Psalmist, *My soul shall be joyful in the Lord, it shall rejoice in my salvation*, Psal. xxxv. 9. *The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom then shall I fear ? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom then shall I be afraid ?* Psal. xxvii. 1. *O come, let us sing unto the Lord, let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation*, Psal. xcv. 1. *O sing unto the Lord, bless his name, shew forth his salvation from day to day*, Psal. xcvi. 1, 2.

Thus we find David and the prophets all along ac-

knowledging, that *salvation is of the Lord*, Jonah ii. 9. Psal. iii. 8. *That he is the God of our salvation*, Psal. xxiv. 5, &c. *That we are saved only by the Lord our God*, Hos. i. 7 And therefore unto him only they always prayed for salvation, saying, הושיענו, *Save us, O God of our salvation*, 1 Chron. xvi. 35. Psal. cvi. 47. and הושיעה נא, *Save us now, we beseech thee, O Lord*, Psal. cxviii. 25. Hence it was, that when the Jews would give the greatest glory they could to God, as they sometimes sung *Hallelujah*, at other times they cried out, *Hosannah, save us we beseech thee*; as reckoning, that when they attributed their salvation wholly unto God, and prayed to him only for it, they praised him as effectually as when they did it in express terms; especially in the feast of tabernacles, this was done so often, that the feast itself was from hence called הושענא רבא, the great Hosannah. And it is very observable, that when our blessed Saviour was coming to Jerusalem, a little before the passover, the people cut down branches from the trees, as they did at the feast of tabernacles, and used the same acclamations also unto him, saying, *Hosannah to the Son of David: blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosannah in the highest*, Matt. xxi. 9. As if they had said, Say ye, Hosannah, save us now, to the Son of David; which I cannot but look upon as by the special providence of God. For though but few, if any of them designed it, yet they hereby applied their Hosannahs to their proper object, to God our Saviour, who was then in the midst of them, crying, Hosannah, save us now, unto him who alone could do it; and so ascribing unto him all the praise and glory of that salvation, which they so earnestly expect and desire from God.

But we certainly have as much reason as they had, to sing Hosannah to the Son of David, to laud and magnify the eternal God our Saviour, by ascribing our salvation wholly unto him. For this is the way, as we find in the Revelations, which the church triumphant in

heaven also useth in praising of him ; and therefore we of the church militant here on earth may well join with them, in singing *Hallelujah, salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God*, Rev. xix. 1. And again, chap. vii. 10. *Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.*

SERMON XXVIII.

CHRIST THE SOLE AUTHOR OF GRACE AND TRUTH.

JOHN i. 17.

For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

THERE is a great dispute among expositors, whether these words were first written by St. John the Evangelist, or spoken first by St. John the Baptist, as they a little before were ; but this is, like most other disputes, frivolous and unnecessary : for it is no matter who spoke or wrote them, so long as we are sure they are the words of the Holy Ghost, who was pleased not only to dictate, but to cause them also to be recorded, that mankind might always know, by whom grace and truth came into the world ; a thing so necessary to be known, that our eternal salvation depends upon it : for it is only by grace and truth that we can be saved ; but unless we know how and by whom it came, we can never know how to come at it, so as to be saved by it. And therefore the Holy Spirit of God, of his infinite mercy, hath been pleased to acquaint us with it, saying, *For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*

For the understanding of which divine sentence, we must first observe in general, that what we here translate grace and truth, is the same that so often occurs in the Old Testament under the names of חסד ואמת,

the latter of which is always translated truth or faithfulness; the other חסד we commonly, following the LXX, translate mercy, sometimes goodness, sometimes loving-kindness, or the like; but it most properly signifies, that which we call grace, favour, or kindness, especially to one that doth not deserve it, and can no way require it. In this sense these two words are frequently put together, none more in all the Old Testament. The first time we meet with them together is where Abraham's servant being sent to fetch a wife for his master's son, and finding his journey prosperous, he said, *Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy, and his truth*, Gen. xxiv. 27. Afterwards he said to Laban and Bethuel, *If ye will deal kindly and truly with my master*, ver. 49. In the original it is, *If ye will deal kindness, or mercy and truth*; the same words that were used before. The same phrase is used also by Jacob to Joseph, Gen. xlvii. 29. and by the two spies to Rachab, Josh. ii. 14. And David said to Ittai, *Mercy and truth be with thee*, 2 Sam. xv. 20. which is the same in effect, as if he had said, *The Lord be with thee*; or as he himself had before said to the men of Jabesh-Gilead, *The Lord shew mercy and truth to you*, chap. ii. 6. that is, *The Lord preserve you and save you*; for it is to these two things that our preservation and salvation are ascribed. *Let thy loving-kindness*, saith he, *or thy mercy and truth, preserve me*, Psal. xl. 11. *O prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him*, Psal. lxi. 7. *Mercy and truth preserve the king*, saith Solomon, Prov. xx. 28. And David again, *He hath remembered his mercy and truth towards the house of Israel, and all the ends of the world have seen the salvation of our God*, Psal. xcvi. 3. *For by mercy and truth iniquity is purged*, Prov. xvi. 6. See also Psal. lxxxv. 9, 10. xl. 10. Prov. iii. 3. xiv. 22. Hence it is that David so often praiseth God, particularly for these two divine properties together; *I will praise thy name for*

thy loving-kindness, and for thy truth, Psal. cxxxviii. 2. *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give the glory; for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake*, Psal. cxv. 1. *For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds*, Psal. lvii. 10. xxxvi. 5. cviii. 4. Thus he praiseth God also, Psal. lvii. 3. lxxxix. 1, 2, 14. c. 5. cxvii. 2. And, to sum up all in few words, he saith, *All the paths of the Lord*, that is, all his dealings with them, *are mercy and truth, to such as keep his covenant and his testimonies*, Psal. xxv. 10.

From all which it appears, that the church hath all along, from Abraham's time, been used to speak of these two properties together; neither can it be imagined that Abraham's servant first began it, but that he learnt it of his master, and he from his ancestors, as they had received it from Adam, when God first promised mercy to mankind: for the promise being made by God himself, his faithful people could not but believe in the truth of it, and therefore constantly used this form of speech, *mercy and truth*, to testify their faith in, and their thankfulness for, the said promise, notwithstanding their unworthiness of it; which they could not but acknowledge, as Jacob did, saying to God, *I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and all the truth*; or, as it is in the original, *I am less than all the mercies, and all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant*, Gen. xxxii. 10.

But that which is chiefly to be observed in our present case is, that when Moses desired to see the glory of God, saying to him, *I beseech thee, shew me thy glory*; God said, *I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee*, Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19. And soon after, *the Lord accordingly passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth*, chap. xxxiv. 6. or, as we elsewhere translate the same words, *plenteous, or full of mercy and truth*,

Psal. lxxxvi. 15. which will give great light to the words a little before my text, and they to my text itself; *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*, John i. 14. The evangelist is here speaking of the *Word*, by which all things were made, ver. 1, 2. And he here saith, *the same Word was made flesh*, or, as we say, incarnate, καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, *and dwelt in us*, in our nature, and so among us: *and we*, saith St. John, *beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of*, or from, *the Father*; such glory as became the only-begotten Son of God. This glory St. John, with two other disciples, saw at our Lord's transfiguration upon the mount, when *his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light*; and there came a voice that said, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*, Matt. xvii. 2, 5. *Then*, as another of them saith, *they were eye-witnesses of his majesty; for he received from God the Father honour and glory*, &c. 2 Pet. i. 16, 17. So that what Moses desired to see upon one mount, these three disciples saw upon another, even *the glory of God*: and what God there complained of himself, is here proclaimed by his Spirit, of him whose glory the disciples saw, which is itself also his greatest glory, even *that he is full of grace and truth*; or, which is the same, *of goodness, or of mercy and truth*: which great glory is here asserted of him, as he is the Word made flesh, God and man in one person; as such, he is full of grace and truth. And then it follows in the next verse but one, *and of his fulness have all we received*, ver. 16. not only we who saw his glory upon the mount, but all of us receive of his fulness: *for it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell*, Col. i. 19. And how much soever we receive of his fulness, his fulness is still the same; as the sun loseth nothing by our receiving light and heat from it. But that which is here more particularly spoken of,

is his fulness of grace and truth ; and therefore when the evangelist had said, *Of his fulness have we all received*, he adds, *and grace for grace* ; that is, grace in us for that which is in him, or which he is full of : and, by consequence, all manner of grace, or favour, or mercy, that we can possibly stand in need of ; for it is all fully in him, and it is of his fulness that we receive it. He doth not add, *and truth for truth* ; for though Christ be as full of truth as he is of grace, yet that is only in him, and is not communicated, but only manifested to us ; and we cannot properly be said to receive, but to believe it : and it is by our believing his truth, that we receive of the fulness of his grace. And we cannot receive the one, without believing the other : for which reason they are so frequently put together not only here, but, as I have shewn, all along in the Old Testament.

Now my text is brought in as a proof of what thus went before. It was before said, *that the Word made flesh was full of grace and truth, and that of his fulness we have all received*. Now to prove this, it is here added, *for the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ* : for if grace and truth came by him, it is of him only that we can receive it.

But here we may observe, first, that this is the first place wherein Jesus Christ is expressly named by this evangelist ; before this, he had all along called him *the Word* : but that we may know whom he means by *the Word*, he here plainly calls him *Jesus Christ*. Again, we may here observe how much he prefers Jesus before Moses ; Moses was hitherto accounted by the Jews the greatest person that ever lived upon earth ; none being in their esteem comparable to him. But here we see one preferred far before him : for only the law was given by Moses, the law of commandments and ordinances ; no grace to enable us to obey that law, nor mercy to any that transgressed it : nor so much as any

promise of such grace of mercy, upon the truth of which we could depend for it. But *both grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*, as certainly as the law was given by Moses.

And it is very observable also, that the law is here said to be given by Moses ; but it is not said that grace and truth was given, but that it came by Jesus Christ, ἐγένετο, it was made by him : the same word that is used a little before, where it is said, πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, *All things were made by him*, ver. 3. As all things else, so grace and truth was made, had its very being and existence by him ; so that without him there would have been no such thing, as either grace or truth, ever heard of in the world, which is far more than what is said of Moses in respect of the law : for the law was only given by him as a servant or minister, sent from God to deliver his will to mankind ; *but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*, as the author and founder of it. And therefore, as the apostle argues, *this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant ; but Christ, as a Son, over his own house*, Heb. iii. 3, 5, 6. Though the law was given by Moses, it was not his own, but the law of God ; whereas both grace and truth is Christ's own ; he himself is full of it in himself, and it is from him that it flows to us, as from its spring or fountain : for, as it is here expressly said, *grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*.

It came by Jesus Christ, at its first coming into the world, and in all ages since ; whatsoever grace and truth ever came into the world, it came by him ; but there hath been grace and truth in the world, from the beginning of it : and therefore Jesus Christ, by whom it came, must needs have been from the beginning too, which I note, by the way, against the Socinians ; against whom the whole stream of holy Scriptures runs so full,

that I cannot but wonder what their heads, or rather what their hearts, are made of, that they can or dare stand against it.

These things being premised concerning the words in general, we shall now consider them more particularly, and shew how both *grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*; which is one of the most noble and divine, as well as the most comfortable subjects that we can ever exercise our thoughts upon: for it contains the sum and substance of the whole Gospel, as it is distinguished from the Law; the Gospel being nothing else but the glad tidings of grace and truth to mankind. And therefore when the evangelist would shew us how both the Law and the Gospel came into the world, he expresseth it in these terms, *The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*

But first grace, and then truth: grace is first, not in respect of time, but in order, and the nature of the thing; for they both came together into the world at first, and they always go together still: but grace made way, as it were, for the truth here spoken of to come; and truth therefore came, because grace did so: which therefore is placed first, and must accordingly be first considered.

What we are to understand by grace in this place, may be gathered from what we have already discoursed, concerning the word so often joined together with truth, in the Old Testament; even the free, undeserved favour, kindness, or mercy of God, howsoever shewed or expressed to mankind. And so the word χάρις, grace, is generally used in the New Testament; and opposed to any thing that we can deserve by the works which we ourselves do. For to him that worketh, saith the apostle, *the reward is not reckoned of grace, but of debt*, Rom. iv. 4. And speaking of the election of grace, he saith, *If by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace: but if it be of works, then it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work*,

chap. xi. 6. And in my text, grace as well as truth is opposed to the whole law, and so to all the works of it : and therefore it must needs here signify, whatsoever favour God is pleased to shew us, or to do for us ; which we, by our own works, do no way deserve or merit at his hands. And seeing we cannot possibly of ourselves deserve any at all, therefore whatsoever we have, must come from his free grace and good will to us. This is that grace which is here said to come by Jesus Christ ; even all the favour that God is pleased to have or do for any man in the world, of what sort or kind soever it is, it all comes by Jesus Christ.

That it doth so, we cannot doubt, having God's own word for it : and how it comes by him, we may easily understand, if we do but consider, that all mankind, from the first to the last man, having sinned, and so offended the almighty Creator and Governor of the world, they are all, and every one in themselves, equally under his displeasure, and obnoxious to the dismal effects of it, as much as the apostate angels are, to whom he never did, nor will shew any favour or mercy at all. But the Word being made flesh, and having in that flesh or nature of man suffered death, even the death of the cross, he the said Word made flesh, or Jesus Christ the righteous, became thereby a *propitiation for the sins of the world*, or for all mankind, 1 John ii. 2. So that God in him is become propitious or gracious to men, and is reconciled again to them, as much as if they had never offended him. This is that great evangelical doctrine which the apostle teacheth, saying, *All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ ; and hath given us the ministry of reconciliation, to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them*, 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. Christ having in our nature, and so in our stead, suffered the punishments which were due to us for our trespasses, therefore God doth not impute them to us ; and not imputing to us the

trespasses for which he was before displeased with us, he is therefore now reconciled, or pleased again with us : but all this, as we are here taught, is only in and by Jesus Christ. For, as the same apostle saith in another place, *It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell : and having made peace through the blood of the cross by him, to reconcile all things to himself by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven : and you that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your minds, by wicked works ; yet now hath he reconciled, in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unreprouvable in his sight*, Col. i. 19, 20, 21, 22. Where we see, that our peace with God is made through the blood of the cross ; that it is by him, whose blood was there shed, that we are reconciled to God ; and that we are so far reconciled through his death, that notwithstanding we were before alienated, and enemies to God, yet he presents us holy, unblameable, unreprouvable in his sight, which is the same in effect with that before mentioned, that he doth not impute unto us our trespasses, but accepts of us as holy and righteous ; and deals with us accordingly, not for any thing in ourselves, but only in him, and for his sake, in whom all fulness dwells, that especially whereby he is said to be full of grace and truth. And therefore all the grace and favour that we, or any man, receive from God, we receive it only by Jesus Christ, out of that fulness of it that is in him. It all flows to us only through his blood, insomuch, that if he had never died for us, we had all been in the same state with the fallen angels ; not only without having, but without hoping for any grace or mercy from God ; yea, there would have been no such thing as grace and mercy in the world : for the only creatures that we know of, capable of it, are angels and men. The angels that keep their first estate have no occasion for it, having never offended God. And as he never shewed any of the angels that fell, so he never would have shewed any

to fallen men, if Jesus Christ had not died for them. And therefore it is by him that grace came into the world at first, and it is by him only that it comes to any one now. Hence it is, that it is so often called the grace of Christ, and sometimes the *grace that is in Christ Jesus*, 2 Tim. ii. 1. And that St. Paul, as he begins all his epistles with saying, *Grace and peace, or grace, and mercy, and peace from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ*; so he concludes most of them, as St. John doth the Revelations, with, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all*, Rom. xvi. 20, 24. 1 Cor. xvi. 23. 2 Cor. xiii. 14. Gal. vi. 18. Phil. iv. 23. 1 Thess. v. 28. 2 Thess. iii. 18. Philem. ver. 25. Rev. xxii. 21. The rest he concludes with saying only, *Grace be with you*, Col. iv. 18. 1 Tim. vi. 21. 2 Tim. iv. 22. Tit. iii. 15. Eph. vi. 24. which is the same in effect; all grace being the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: there is none but what is in him, and we can have none but what comes from him, and by him.

But blessed be his great name, there is no grace, no favour, no mercy whatsoever that we are capable of, but we may have it by him: and whatsoever we have, we must acknowledge ourselves indebted to him for it; which that we may be the more sensible of, I shall instance in some of those many and great favours which are particularly mentioned in God's holy word, as coming by Jesus Christ. As for example:

Are our sins pardoned, and our obligations to punishment for them cancelled and made void; so that God doth not execute the judgments upon us which he hath threatened? This is an unspeakable mercy indeed; but we are wholly beholden to Jesus Christ for it, for he is that *Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world*, John i. 29. and it is in him we *have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace*, Eph. i. 7. Col. i. 14.

Are we justified before God? Are we accepted of, and accounted as righteous in his sight, notwithstanding that

we are not really so in ourselves? This must be ascribed wholly to the grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord; for we are *justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ*, Rom. iii. 24. *Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification*, chap. iv. 25. *Who was made sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*, 2 Cor. v. 21. Do we sincerely repent of all our sins? Are we turned *from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, that we may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Jesus Christ*, Acts xxvi. 18. We must thank the said Lord Jesus Christ for it; for it is his gift, whom *God hath exalted with his right-hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, as well as forgiveness of sins*, chap. v. 31. And *who of God is made unto us wisdom, as well as righteousness, and sanctification, as well as redemption*, 1 Cor. i. 30.

Have we power to overcome the world, and to live above it? to despise all things here below, and to have our conversation always in heaven? Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? 1 John v. 5. Hath sin no dominion over us? It is because we are not under the law, but under grace, the grace of Jesus Christ, Rom. vi. 14. Are we delivered from this body of death and sin within us? We must thank God for that, through Jesus Christ our Lord, as his apostle doth, Rom. vii. 24, 25. Can we resist the devil, so as to make him fly from us? Who gives us that power, but he that was manifested for that very purpose, that he might destroy the works of the devil? 1 John iii. 8. Have we access to the almighty Creator and Governor of the world? Can we approach to draw nigh to him, who is infinitely above us, and so highly provoked by us? There is no way certainly of doing that but by Jesus Christ: *I*, saith he, *am the way*,

the truth, and the life ; no man cometh to the Father but by me, John xiv. 6.

Are our prayers ever heard, and our petitions granted? Is any thing we ask ever done for us? It is so, if we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, not otherwise; *Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father, saith he, in my name, he will give it you, John xvi. 23. And, If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it, chap. xiv. 14.*

Do we ever receive any benefit by the means of grace, which God is pleased to vouchsafe unto us? Are our understandings thereby enlightened, our hearts opened, our consciences touched, our passions subdued, our souls renewed and sanctified? All this is done by Jesus Christ. It was he that opened his apostles' understandings, *that they might understand the Scriptures, Luke xxiv. 45.* It was he that opened Lydia's heart, *that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul, Acts xvi. 14.* *And wheresoever two or three are gathered together in his name, there is he in the midst of them, Matt. xvii. 20.* on purpose to make his word and ordinance effectual to the purposes aforesaid.

Have we the honour and the favour to be called, and really to become the sons of God? This grace also comes by Jesus Christ; for, *as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name, John i. 12.* Is the Holy Spirit of God infused into us, to renew and sanctify us, to illuminate, direct, and assist us in what we do? For this we are beholden to Christ, whose Spirit it is, and by whom alone we are made the sons and heirs of God; for, *Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father: wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ, Gal. iv. 6, 7* All is through Christ; *not by works of righteousness which we have done, but accord-*

ing to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, Tit. iii. 5, 6.

Can we do all things, or any thing that God requires? Are we able to walk, as Zacharias and Elizabeth did, in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless? Who puts this strength and grace into us, but Christ Jesus? *I can do all things*, saith St. Paul, *through Christ, which strengtheneth me*, Phil. iv. 13. And, is any thing that we do acceptable to God, notwithstanding it comes far short of what his law requires? It is so, only by Jesus Christ, as St. Peter teacheth us, 1 Pet. ii. 5.

Have we any consolation or support under the troubles we meet with in the world, particularly those we suffer for Christ's sake? It is by Christ alone we have it, but by him we have it abundantly; for, *As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ*, 2 Cor. i. 5. Have we peace with God, or with ourselves, in our own minds? It is Christ that gives it us; *Peace I leave with you*, saith he, *my peace I give unto you*, John xiv. 27. And, *These things have I spoken, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world*, John xvi. 33.

Can we look grim death in the face, defy its power, and triumph over it? In this we must say with the apostle, *Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*, 1 Cor. xv. 57.

Do we hope to be saved? How can we be so, but by our Saviour? No way certainly. But we believe with St. Peter, *that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved, even as they*, Acts xv. 11. It is he that prepares us for heaven, and heaven for us too; *In my Father's house*, saith he, *are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a*

place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also, John xiv. 2, 3. It is Christ therefore who takes in and keeps out of heaven whom he pleaseth; so that none ever did or ever can come there, but by him. And therefore, when St. Stephen was ready to go thither, he desires Christ to receive him, saying, *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,* Acts vii. 59.

Thus, from first to last, all the grace and favour that ever any man did, or ever shall receive from God, it all comes by Jesus Christ; not only that grace (as we commonly use the word) whereby he is pleased to incline our hearts unto himself, to love, and fear, and trust on him, whereby he makes us holy, and meek, and humble, and sober, and just, and charitable, and enables us sincerely to endeavour to live according to his laws; but whatsoever grace, or kindness, or mercy, he vouchsafeth to any of us, either in this world or the next, as it is all the same grace, so it all comes by Jesus Christ alike, of what kind or nature soever it is; *for the law was given by Moses, but grace,* grace in general, and therefore all manner of grace, *came by Jesus Christ.*

And not only grace, but truth too; and as grace, so truth, in the fullest extent of the word, came by him. The truth of the whole Levitical or ceremonial law; for that was made up altogether of types, and shadows, and figures of *good things to come,* Heb. x. 1 ix. 9, 24. Christ was the antitype, the body, and the truth of them all, Col. ii. 17 and therefore is called a *minister of the true tabernacle*, in contradistinction to that where Aaron and his sons ministered; which, together with all the service of it, was made according to the pattern that was shewed to Moses in the mount, Exod. xxv. 40. Heb. viii. 5. And therefore that was only a copy, Christ was the original. All the sacrifices which were there offered had no virtue or efficacy in themselves; *for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin,* Heb. x. 4. No,

Christ was the only true sacrifice that was ever offered in the world : all other signified nothing, but as they had respect to him. Wherefore, as the foresaid law was given by Moses, the truth of it came by Jesus Christ.

And if we take truth here as it is opposed to falsehood and lies, and so denotes the true objects of our faith, what we may and ought to believe to be truly so, as it is represented and made known to us, especially concerning God, and all things belonging to our everlasting peace ; all such truth likewise came by Jesus Christ ; so that no man ever had, or can have, any true knowledge of God, or believe aright in him, but by those divine revelations which Christ hath made of him, by his prophets in the Old Testament, and by himself and his apostles in the New : for, as it follows in the words after my text, *no man hath seen God at any time ; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him*, John i. 18. *And no man, saith he, knoweth the Son, but the Father ; neither knoweth any man the Father, but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him*, Matt. xi. 27 This is that which he himself intimated to Pilate, when he said, *To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth ; every one that is of the truth heareth my voice*, John xviii. 37 Wherefore in this sense also truth came by Jesus Christ.

And so did the truth of all the threatenings and promises that God hath made to mankind ; whatsoever punishment God hath threatened against the sins of men, it was fully executed upon Christ, and suffered by him in their nature. As when God said to Adam, *In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die*, Gen. iii. 17 this was accomplished in Christ, the second Adam, who died in effect the same day, and is therefore said to be *slain from the beginning of the world*, Apoc. xiii. 8. And when he said, *Cursed is every one that*

continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them, Deut. xxvii. 26. this was exactly fulfilled in Christ ; when he was *made a curse for us*, Gal. iii. 13. So that, notwithstanding his infinite grace and mercy in the pardon of our sins, through the blood of Christ ; yet God's word was verified in him, and so truth as well as grace came by him.

But that which seems chiefly to be aimed at in this place is the truth of the promises which God hath been graciously pleased to make us ; for truth being here, and all along in the Old Testament, joined with grace or mercy, it hath doubtless a peculiar respect to that, as promised to us by Almighty God. But all such promises are made and confirmed to us only in Jesus Christ, who is therefore said to be a minister of the *circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers*, Rom. xv. 8. *And all the promises of God in him are Yea, and in him Amen, to the glory of God by us*, 2 Cor. i. 20. that is, in him they are all and every one truth itself, which cannot but be fulfilled. To the same purpose is that, where the apostle saith, *that the covenant, wherein all the promises are contained, was confirmed of God in Christ*, Gal. iii. 17. And that the truth here spoken of hath respect to the covenant, appears in that, instead of truth, the covenant is sometimes joined with mercy ; as, *My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him*, Psal. lxxxix. 21. And soon after, the Psalmist having said, *My mercy will I not take from him, nor suffer my truth to fail*, he immediately adds, *My covenant will I not break*, ver. 33, 34. And instead of shewing mercy and truth, God is often said to keep covenant and mercy with his people, Deut. vii. 9, 12. 1 Kings viii. 23. 2 Chron. vi. 14. Neh. i. 5. ix. 32. Dan. ix. 4. Which shews that when truth is joined with mercy or grace, as in my text, it is principally meant of the truth which God manifesteth, in keeping the covenant and promises

which he hath made to us; which being made, confirmed, and fulfilled only in Christ, without him the truth of God could never have appeared in the world; we could never have known that he was true to his promise, neither could he have been so, unless he had first made it. Whereas now, through Christ, his truth shines forth in every favour he is pleased to shew us; and therefore, as the law was given by Moses, *not only grace, but truth also, came by Jesus Christ.*

Now from hence we may first learn, what reason the holy angels had to sing at the birth of Christ, *Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men*, Luke ii. 14. Seeing the glory of God's grace and truth appeared in the peace and good will he shewed to men, by him who was then born, as his wisdom, power, and goodness did in the creation of the world.

But what cause have we poor mortals upon earth to praise and magnify the eternal God, for sending his only-begotten Son into the world, seeing he brought both grace and truth along with him? For otherwise, what would have become of us? We had all been in the same forlorn estate with the fiends of hell; destitute of all hopes of ever finding any grace or favour in the sight of God.

But did grace come by Jesus Christ? From hence we may then see where to find it. Not in Plato, or Aristotle, nor in Moses himself. It is to be had only in Jesus Christ: it came by him alone, and it is in him alone that any mortal man ever did, or ever can come by it.

But did truth as well as grace come by him? Then we may be confident that we may have it in him: of his fulness we may all receive, and grace for grace. We may be confident, I say, of it, seeing that in him the truth of God himself is engaged for it.

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need, Heb. iv. 16. Let us, by a quick and

lively faith, apply ourselves continually, in the use of the means which he hath ordained, to Christ our Saviour, to procure us favour in the sight of God, to give us repentance and forgiveness of sins, to cleanse and purify our hearts, to guide and assist us by his grace, till he hath brought us to himself in glory. And then he will certainly do it for us, as the truth is in Jesus, and as it came by him, *who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God blessed for ever.*

SERMON XXIX.

CHRIST THE SAVIOUR OF ALL THAT COME TO HIM.

JOHN vi. 37

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out

THESE are the words of Jesus Christ our Saviour, the only Saviour we have in all the world: without whom it is impossible for any mortal man to be ever saved; but by whom any man upon earth, and we as well as others, may all be saved: saved from our sins, saved from our ghostly enemies, saved from the wrath of God, and received into his love and favour. He is both able and willing to do it for us all. That he is able, we cannot doubt, seeing he is almighty, he can do what he will, and therefore can as easily save us, as he can destroy us. And that he is willing, we may be confident, seeing he came into the world on purpose to save sinners, such as we are: for this purpose he was born; for this purpose he lived so long upon earth; for this purpose he died, and rose again, and went up to heaven, that he might be able to save, to the utmost, all that come unto God by him; and therefore nothing, be sure, shall be wanting on his part, in order to his saving any of us: and all that he requires on our part too is only to apply ourselves unto him for it, which is the least that could possibly be required of us; and yet he himself hath been graciously pleased, in effect, to tell us, that if we do but that, he will certainly save us; as ap-

pears from many places in his holy Gospel, particularly from the words which I have now read; wherein having first acquainted us with the way by which we may go unto him for salvation, he assures us withal, that he will reject none that do so, saying, *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and he that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*

In which few words is contained the whole mystery and method of our salvation, unfolded and laid open before us; what is done on God's part, what must be done on ours, and what Christ then doth in order to it. God the Father first gives us to his Son: we being so given, must accordingly go to him; and when we do that, he is pleased to receive and save us: all which is expressed in such terms, that we may read the divinity of our Saviour in every part of it. For to whom would the Father give us, but to one of the same divine nature with himself? Would he give us to a creature? No, surely; for then he would give us away from himself, and we should be no longer his. Who but God could say, *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me?* Hath any creature the hearts of all men in his hand? No, surely; none but God could be certain that any, much less that all, would come unto him. And who also but God could say, *Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out, but will give him eternal life,* as he himself explains it afterwards? Can a creature give eternal life, consisting in the enjoyment of the Creator himself? Can he dispose of that to whom he pleaseth? No, surely: none but God can do that, and therefore none but God could truly say he would; and yet we see our Saviour said it, and thereby shewed forth his eternal power and Godhead, to our unspeakable comfort. Unspeakable comfort indeed! that we have such an almighty Saviour; and that he himself hath told us with his own mouth, that he will cast out none that come unto him.

But these being the words of our only Saviour, con-

cerning the only way of our obtaining salvation by him, they deserve to be more particularly considered by all that hope to be saved, as we, I suppose, do. For which purpose we may observe, that here is something asserted, and something promised by him: that which he asserts is, that *all that the Father giveth him shall come to him*; that which he promiseth is, that *such as come to him, he will in no wise cast out*. In speaking to which, I shall not presume to alter the method which our Lord was pleased to use in speaking them; but, taking the words in the same order wherein they lie, shall endeavour, by his assistance who spake them, to give you the true sense and meaning of all and every one of them; there being never a one but what hath its weight, and ought to be considered by us.

The first word, *all*, in the original is of the neuter gender, as it is also in the parallel place, John xvii. 2. the better to express the universality of the proposition; as if he had said, All and every thing that the Father giveth me, whatsoever kind of people they are, Jews or Gentiles, bond or free, all shall come to me; and not only all of them, but all that is in every one, the whole man, soul and body, as he intimates also in saying, *that he will raise them up at the last day*; which must be understood of the body: and so all that the Father giveth him shall come to him wholly, entirely, without any exception or reserve.

All that the Father; that is, God the Father, whom Christ usually called the Father, and his Father, as he well might upon many accounts, especially these two: first, because he is the eternal Son of God, begotten of him so, as none but he ever was, who is therefore called, *The only-begotten Son of God*, John iii. 16, 18. *The only-begotten of the Father*, John i. 14. and absolutely, *The only-begotten Son*, ver. 18. and, *The first-begotten*, Heb. i. 6. The Father having from all eternity begotten him, by communicating his own unbegotten essence to him: as the Son himself, who best

knew how he was begotten, acquaints us, saying, *As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself*, John v. 26. For, to have life in himself, being an essential property, and so the very essence of God himself, the Father, by giving that to him, gave him his own essence, and so begot him of the same essence or nature with himself; insomuch that the Son could truly say, *I and the Father are one*, John x. 30. ἓν ἔσμεν, we are *unum*, one thing, one being, one essence, one Jehovah, Deut. iv. 4. But yet he speaks of himself and the Father as two distinct persons, *I and the Father are*; and he names himself first, because, speaking here of his divine essence, which is the same in both, it is no matter which is named first: there being no such thing in that respect as first and last between them; for they are both one and the same eternal God; and therefore when he saith in my text, *All that the Father giveth me*, he doth not speak of the Father under this notion, as he was begotten of him, so as to be the same God with him; for as such, nothing could be given to him, all things being originally his.

But Christ might truly call God his Father, not only as he himself is God also, begotten of him, but likewise as he is God and man in one person: for that personal union being affected by the power of the Highest coming upon the blessed Virgin, and by the Holy Ghost overshadowing her; *therefore*, said the angel to her, *that holy Thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God*, Luke i. 35. He doth not say, that holy God, or that holy man, but τὸ ἅγιον, that holy thing, consisting both of the divine and human nature, united together in one person, shall be called, or shall be the Son of God; and therefore shall be so, because it shall be conceived in her, and made such an holy thing by the immediate power of God, and so by God himself, who therefore is truly his Father in this respect also, even as he is *Emanuel*, Θεάνθρωπος, God and man in one person, and as

such the Mediator between God and men: in which respect, he is capable of receiving whatsoever is given him of the Father, and therefore saith, *All that the Father giveth me.*

All that the Father giveth, that he giveth; he acknowledgeth all that he hath as Mediator also, to be of the Father's gift: as his apostle likewise saith, *every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights*, James i. 17. Much more this, the greatest gift that ever was, or can be given to the sons of men: whereby God first gave his Son to be their Saviour, and then gives them to him, to be saved by him: for, as the Son himself saith, *God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*, John iii. 16. Here is the fountain from whence all the gifts of God to mankind come; they all come originally from his love to them as made in his own image. It was from this that God gave his Son, his only-begotten Son; he gave him to be made flesh, to take upon him the form of a servant, to be made in the likeness of men, and so to become their Saviour. And as he thus gave his Son to us, so he gives us unto his Son, to his eternal, his only-begotten Son, of the same nature with himself; he gives us to him, as he is now become the Son of man too, of the same nature with us; who therefore as such saith, *All that the Father giveth me.*

But how doth the Father give them? This our blessed Saviour foresaw would be mistaken by men of corrupt minds; and therefore to prevent that, he was graciously pleased to explain it himself, at the same time, saying, *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him*, ver. 44. He gives them therefore by drawing them to his Son: he draws them not with force and violence, not haling them along like stocks, or stones, or beasts that have no understanding; but he draws them as men, as they are reasonable and free

agents, and therefore not against their wills, but with them, according to the promise he made to his Son, *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power*, Psal. cx. 3. He orders it so in his providence, and by the influences of his grace and Holy Spirit concurring with it, that they are willing to go to Christ as he would have them; and he gives them to him so, as they that will give themselves too, with the whole bent and inclination of their wills.

That this is the way of God's drawing men, is plain from his own words, as plain as words can make it: let us hear them, that we may doubt no longer of it; *I drew them*, saith he, *with cords of a man, with bands of love; and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them*, Hos. xi. 4. What care doth Almighty God here take, that we may rightly understand how he, by his grace, inclines and determines our wills so, as that we also will what he would have us? Every expression hath its weight, and therefore ought to be duly weighed by us. First, saith he, *I drew them with the cords of a man*; of Adam, man in general, such cords as are fit and proper to draw men with, as they are men, endued with a principle of reason, to discern between good and evil, and with freedom of will, to choose the one before the other; and with such a temper and agreement of both, that what we apprehend to be good, that we freely choose, and refuse what we think to be evil. Accordingly, God sets before us good and evil, and both in such a light, that we may clearly discern the difference between them, which is the good, and which is evil for us; and then it follows in course, that we choose the good before the evil; otherwise, we should do violence to our very nature, and act contrary to our own minds and judgments. These therefore are the cords whereby God draws us, such as are suitable to the constitution that all men are made of: and that we may better understand how he draws us with these cords of a man, he adds, *with the*

bands of love ; with such expressions of his love and kindness to us, that he knows will allure and draw us. This way one man commonly draws another ; how much more can Almighty God do it, who hath the hearts of all men in his hand, and the greatest favours to bestow, that any man can possibly desire ? This is that which the apostle means, where he saith, *that the goodness of God leadeth us to repentance*, Rom. ii. 4. It doth not force or drag us, but it leads us to repentance, and so to Christ.

To explain this more fully to all capacities, he is pleased to use a similitude taken from the custom of the ancients, who when they yoked their oxen for any service, they put the yoke about the ox's neck, so as that by something coming from it, that reached to his jaws, they tied up his mouth, or muzzled him, that he might not eat. Which therefore was forbidden to the Jews, when the ox was to tread out the corn ; *Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn*, Deut. xxv. 4. because he could not then partake of the fruit of his labour. In allusion whereunto, Almighty God here saith, *And I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I set meat unto them* : as if he had said, I dealt with them as an husbandman doth with his oxen, that have been at work, who first muzzleth them, that nothing may hinder them from eating ; and then sets meat before them, that they may eat if they will. Whereby he plainly gives us to understand, how he deals with men, in drawing them to Christ : he, by his preventing grace, first removes all such obstacles as impede and hinder them from feeding upon that bread of life ; and then he sets it before them, that they may feed upon it if they please. And seeing men, in their corrupt estate, have no mind or appetite to such spiritual food, but rather loathe the very sight of it, he is pleased to take care of that too ; for he purgeth and cleanseth their souls from those gross and corrupt humours, which spoil their appetite ; and restoreth them to such a sound

temper of mind, that they hunger and thirst after their proper food, as much as a sick body doth, when restored to health. And by this means he brings them at last insensibly to it ; as he himself also tells us in the same place, saying, *I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms, but they knew not that I healed them*, Hos. xi. 3. We are all by nature so weak and impotent, that we cannot of ourselves make one true step to Christ. But God teacheth us to go, holding us up, as they do children, by the arms ; and then we go ourselves, but it is only by his direction and assistance. And though we cannot perceive or know how he doth it, yet we must acknowledge it is he that heals our infirmities, and puts that strength into us, whereby we are both willing and able to go to Christ, and by that means draws us to him.

That this is that which our Saviour means by his Father's drawing us, appears also from the argument which he himself brings to prove he doth it : for having said that no man cometh to him, except the Father draw him, he presently adds, *It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God : every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me*, John vi. 45. From whence we may observe, that the Father's drawing us is the same with his teaching us to go, as it is in the prophet ; or we are then said to be drawn of the Father, when we are taught of God ; when he reveals his word to us, enlightens our minds to see it, and opens our hearts, as he did Lydia's, to receive it, Acts xvi. 14. *and so works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure*, Phil. ii. 13. And they who are thus drawn of God, will certainly come to Christ ; as Christ himself there tells us, saying, *Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me* : but in my text he saith, *All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me*. Therefore to be drawn, or to learn of the Father, is the same with being

given of him ; or at least they always go together : all that learn, are given ; and all that are given, learn. For it is said of both alike, *that they come to Christ*. And so this great work is contrived and managed in such a wonderful manner, that it is both God's act and ours : it is first in us, and then ours by him ; he draws, and we go ; he teacheth, and we learn ; he gives us, and we come to Christ : *All that the Father giveth me, saith he, shall come unto me.*

All that the Father giveth me, saith the Son : God therefore gives all that shall be saved to his Son, as he is God-man, and the Saviour of the world. He doth not save them himself : if he would have done that, his Son need not have suffered so much for them. But as the Son himself saith, *The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son*, John v. 22. if all judgment, then that of pardon and salvation as well as condemnation. As none shall be condemned but by the Son, so none can be saved but by the Son ; and therefore the Father gives them to him to save. He commits them to his care and conduct, to make them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, and then to bring them to it : and therefore from that time forward, the Son looks upon them as his own. *Thine they were*, saith he unto the Father, *and thou gavest them me*, John xvii. 6. They are now his, his own proper goods, *his sheep*, John x. 13, 14. *His inheritance and possession*, Psal. ii. 8. *his jewels*, Mal. iii. 17 *his people, his elect, his peculiar people*, Tit. ii. 14. A people that he hath an absolute right to, and property in, both as being purchased by himself, and as given by the Father, whose they were. They now belong wholly unto him, both as their Lord and Saviour, and live continually under his protection and care ; and therefore whatsoever their outward condition may seem to be, they are really the happiest people in the world, as having him that governs it to protect and save them, and to make all things in it conduce to that end ; as he

will most certainly do, insomuch that they being his, whose all things are, all things else are theirs. As his apostle by his order assures those he had at Corinth, saying, *For all things are yours ; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come ; all are yours ; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's*, 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23. As Christ is God's, so they are Christ's, and therefore all things else are theirs ; yea, and Christ himself too : he is their Prophet, to reveal the will of his Father to them ; their Priest, to make atonement and reconciliation for them ; their King, to rule and govern them ; their Saviour, to save them from their sins, to make them holy and happy for ever. But for that purpose, as the Father hath given them to him, so they must go unto him : and so they be sure will, for he himself hath said it ; *All that the Father giveth me, shall come unto me.*

Shall come to me ; that is, they shall come to me as their Saviour ; or they shall believe and trust on me for their salvation, and for all things necessary in order to it : for by coming to him, he means believing in him ; for so he himself interprets that phrase a little before my text, saying, *I am the bread of life ; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst*, ver. 35. And afterwards again it is written, *But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him : and he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father*, ver. 63, 65. Where it is plain, that what he first calls believing in him, he afterwards expresses by coming to him, using these phrases promiscuously for one another, as both signifying the same thing. And therefore by coming to him, we are not to understand our going to him, where he was while he dwelt upon earth, for so none could go to him ; but they which were then living,

and in that sense Judas himself, who betrayed him, often went to him, and particularly at the same time that he betrayed him : but it is manifest from these words, *that Judas never believed in him, and therefore never came unto him*, in that sense wherein he useth that phrase all along in the Gospel, and particularly in my text, where he saith, *All that the Father giveth him* ; that he giveth in the present tense, at any time whensoever he gives them, they shall or will come to him ; they will become his disciples, so as to believe and trust on him to save them.

And so they certainly will ; for by the Father's giving, as I observed before, is meant his teaching and drawing them to Christ : but they whom God Almighty draws, must needs go ; they whom he teacheth, must needs learn : for he doth not teach them their lesson only by the ear, but makes them learn it by heart ; neither doth he set it only before their eyes, but writes it down in their very souls : *I will put my law*, saith he, *in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts* : and then it follows, *and I will be their God, and they shall be my people*, Jer. xxxi. 33. When God hath written his law in their hearts, so as that they themselves are inclined to it, it follows in course, that they go to Christ, and so become his people.

To make this as plain as it is possible, we need only consider how they who are given to Christ, are taught of God, as Christ himself speaks ; for then we shall clearly see, that they cannot choose but come to Christ, or rather they cannot but choose to come. First therefore, they are taught of God, that he is their Maker, and the Maker and Governor of all things in the world. They are taught of God, that he hath given them several laws to observe, all holy, and just, and good. They are taught of God, that they have often broke or transgressed his said laws, both by doing what he hath forbidden, and by not doing what he hath commanded in them.

They are taught of God, that by breaking of his laws they have incurred his displeasure, and are obnoxious to all the curses and punishments that he hath threatened against every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of his law, to do them. They are taught of God, that these punishments, which they are now subject to, are so severe and terrible, that they cannot be able to bear them, and yet so durable, that they will last for ever. By these means they are taught of God to reflect upon what they have done, to be troubled for all their sins or transgressions of his law, and to repent sincerely of them: and so God gives them *repentance unto life*, Acts xi. 18. and *to the acknowledging of the truth*, 2 Tim. ii. 25. For now they are uneasy and restless in their minds; they know not what to do with themselves, wishing with all their souls that their sins could be pardoned, and God reconciled again to them. But how that can be done, they know not of themselves; if they did, they would soon endeavour after it all they can: being ready to catch at any thing that they think will give any quiet to their minds, and ease them of the burden that lies upon them. Now being thus prepared and disposed for it, they are further taught of God, that what they so earnestly desire, may be had by Christ, and by him only; that if they go to him, he will save them from their sins, and from all the punishments which are due unto them upon their account. And when they are thus taught, and have learned this of God, they cannot but go to Christ; for their own inclinations, excited and assisted by the grace of God, will carry them in course to him, as naturally as our desires of any thing else carry us to the place where it may be had. Hence it is that Christ calls all such, and none but such, to come unto him, saying, *Come to me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*, Matt. xi. 28. He calls no other, because he knows they will not come; but he calls all

who are thus disposed, because they will certainly come to him, as ever they desire to have any rest or quiet in their souls.

This might be further explained by several instances recorded in the holy Scriptures. I shall produce only one at present : When St. Peter, upon the day of Pentecost, had preached a short sermon to the Jews, his auditors were so taught of God, working together with his word, that they were pricked in their hearts ; that is, they were touched with a quick sense of their sins, and of the miserable condition they were thereby in : insomuch that they knew not what to do with themselves, but cried out to the apostles, *Men and brethren, what shall we do*, Acts ii. 37. Upon which St. Peter taught them from God, that by Jesus Christ they might have remission of their sins ; which they no sooner heard, but they received it gladly, and were immediately baptized, and so came to Christ : insomuch that the same day there were added to the number of his disciples about three thousand souls, ver. 41. Which plainly shews both how the Father gave them unto Christ, and how willingly, how gladly they themselves did thereupon come to him : and by consequence, how truly our Lord here saith, *All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me*. Which he had no sooner said, but he presently adds, *And him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out*. And it is well for us that he added this : for though the Father hath given us, and we accordingly do go to Christ, yet if Christ, after all, should reject us, what would then become of us ? We should still be but what we were, in a lost and undone condition. But, blessed be his great name, there is no fear of that ; for we have it here from Christ's own mouth, that he will not cast us out : he will cast none out, not so much as one of all that come unto him. Which that he might better assure us of, he alters here his way of speaking : he said before, *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me* ; but he doth not say, *All*

that come to me I will not cast out. If he had expressed himself so, we might have been apt to suspect, that though he would not cast out all that come to him, yet he might have cast out some ; and we might be in the number of those some, as well as any other : which would have been a great discouragement to us, and to all other from coming to him, in that we could never be certain, but that our labour might be all in vain. Wherefore, to prevent that, he speaks here of every particular person, singly or by himself, τὸν ἐρχόμενον, *Him that cometh to me*, him, whosoever he be, *I will in no wise cast him out.* Whereby we are fully assured, that whatsoever nation a man is of, whatsoever his condition be, whatsoever age he lives in, and howsoever he hath hitherto lived, yet, if he come to Christ, Christ will not cast him out.

I will, saith he, *in no wise cast him out* ; οὐ μὴ ἐκβάλω, with a double negative, to make it the more emphatical : as if he had said, I will not, I will not in any wise cast him out. Whereby he hath given us as full assurance as can be given, that he will cast out no person whatsoever that comes to him. He will not cast out, that is, he will not reject or refuse any that come to him, but will admit them into his flock ; he will receive them into the number of those whom he will take care of, that they shall not be lost, or perish, but have everlasting life : that this is what he means by not casting out, appears from the reason which he himself here gives, why he will not do it, saying, *And this is the Father's will that sent me, that of all which he hath given I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day*, ver. 39. that is, to everlasting life ; as appears from the following verse, as also from his saying afterwards to his Father, *As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him*, John xvii. 2. This therefore being the Father's will in giving them to him, that he might give eternal life to them : this must needs

be that which he means by his not casting them out, even that he will fulfil his Father's will in giving them eternal life, that eternal life which consisteth in the perpetual enjoyment of God, and of all things they can desire in him. To the same purpose is that which he saith a little before my text, *He that cometh to me, shall never hunger ; and he that believeth in me, shall never thirst*, ver. 35. that is, he shall be brought into so happy a state of life, that he shall actually inherit and enjoy all things, and therefore shall never hunger or thirst any more : for his appetite must needs cease, when there is nothing in the world which he hath not ; and, by consequence, nothing which he can desire : for no man can desire that which he already hath. And therefore seeing he shall have all things, he must needs be fully satisfied, and as happy as it is possible for a creature to be. This is that life, that eternal life, which our Saviour here promiseth to all that come to him, as he elsewhere blames those that will not come unto him for it, saying, *And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life*, John v. 40. Whereby he likewise gives us to understand, that it is he only that gives eternal life, and that he gives it to none but those who come to him ; but that all who come to him shall certainly have it.

Shall have it, did I say ? Yea, they have it in a manner already : for Christ himself saith, *He that believeth on me, hath everlasting life*, John vi. 47. *And whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life*, ver. 54. He hath not only an undoubted right and title to it hereafter, but he hath the seed of it sown already in his heart ; which, by degrees, will most certainly grow up to perfection : and therefore may be truly said *to have eternal life abiding in him*, as St. John words it, 1 John iii. 15. *For this is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent*, John xvii. 3. But this Christ gives to those that come to him, so soon as they come to him ; as appears from his saying presently after those words to his

Father, *I have manifested thy name to the men which thou gavest me out of the world : thine they were, and thou gavest them me ; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me ; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them : I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me ; for they are thine,* John xvii. 6, 7, 8, 9. Which words of our blessed Saviour seem to be recorded on purpose to shew us, how he gives eternal life to those who are given by the Father, and therefore come to him. For here we may observe, that he had manifested both the Father and himself unto them ; so that they knew the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he had sent ; *which*, as he had said before, *is eternal life*. We may observe also, that he had given them this knowledge, so as that they knew surely or certainly, that he came from God, and believed upon his word that God had sent him ; and therefore acted their faith on him, as sent from God to save them. Again, we may observe, that as they knew and believed, so they received and kept the words which he had given them from the Father, ver. 6, 8. all the words, and, by consequence, that their knowledge and faith put them also upon obedience to all that he had taught them. But he who thus knows, believes, and obeys the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, must needs have eternal life, as being born of God, and his seed remaineth in him, 1 John iii. 9. Lastly, we may here observe, what our Saviour doth to keep those who come to him always in the true faith and fear of God, that they may live that life which he hath given them : he prays, or intercedes with the Father for them, for all of them, and no other. *I pray for them*, saith he ; *I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me*, ver. 9. *Neither pray I for*

these only, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, ver. 20. But let us hear what he asketh for them: Holy Father, saith he, keep through thine own name these whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are, ver. 11. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil, ver. 15. Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth, ver. 17. That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, ver. 21. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me, ver. 23. And then he adds, Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me, ver. 24. I have transcribed his own words, because they contain a clear specimen of that intercession which he makes in heaven, for all that come to him upon earth. For here we see, that he, by virtue of that sacrifice which he offered for them, doth not only make atonement for their sins, and reconcile them to his Father, *that he may love them as he loves him*, as it is here expressed; but he likewise prays the Father to keep them in his name, to keep them from the evil, to sanctify and make them holy, that they may be made perfect in one, as he and the Father are; and so may be like to God, partakers of the divine nature while they are upon earth, and afterwards live with him for ever in heaven. These are great things which he asketh for them: and yet he never prayeth in vain; for the Father always hears him. By this means it is, that he gives eternal life to all that come to him. He rejects none, but admits them, every one, into an interest in this his most powerful intercession, according as he here promiseth, *Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.*

Neither doth he only promise it, (though that weuld

have been enough,) but, for the greater confirmation of our faith, he gives us the reason why he will cast out none that come to him, even because he came into the world, not to do his own, but the will of the Father which sent him; and the Father's will is, that of all which he giveth him, the Son should lose nothing; *but that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth in him, should have everlasting life*, ver. 38, 39, 40. Wherefore, that he will cast out none that come to him, is as certain as he himself is true and faithful to him that sent him, in doing the work he sent him about: which he did so effectually, that he positively asserts it to his Father himself, saying, *I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do*, John xvii. 4. *Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled*, ver. 12. Judas, whom he here calls the son of perdition, though he seemed to be given to Christ, and to come to him, yet, as I observed before, he really did not; and therefore, although he was lost, as the Scripture had foretold, yet Christ's word is still true, that he never casts out, nor loseth any that really come to him. And as he will never do it himself, so neither can any one force them from him: as he himself also tells us upon another occasion, saying, *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hands; for my Father who gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one*, John x. 27, 28, 29, 30. From whence we may observe, that we have all the security that possibly can be given us, that Christ will never cast out any one man that comes to him. We have his word, we have his obedience to his Father's will, we have his fidelity to the trust reposed in him, we have omnipotence itself engaged for it: and all that we may firmly believe, and be fully persuaded, as we can be of any thing in the

world, that as what our Saviour here saith, *All that the Father giveth, shall come unto me*, is infallibly true ; so he will as infallibly perform what he here promiseth, *Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.*

I hope there are none here present, who think this to be matter of mere speculation ; for there is nothing in the world we are more concerned in, than what we have now heard. For we cannot but all acknowledge that we have many ways offended the almighty Creator and Governor of the world, and are therefore liable to all the misery that he can inflict upon us in this life, and to that everlasting fire, which he hath prepared for the devil and his angels, in the life to come. Neither is there any way whereby it is possible for us to be saved from it, but only by Jesus Christ. But he, as we have now heard, is as willing as he is able to save us all, and every one of us ; we may be confident of it, for we have it from his own mouth, that he will cast out none that come to him, but will give them every one eternal life. And can we hear and believe this, and not rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory ? Whatsoever others may think, for my part, I think there is no comfort in the world comparable to this, that we have such a Saviour, who is thus always ready to take us under his care, and to give us all things that can any way contribute to our being eternally happy ; in-somuch, that if it be not our own fault, there is never a one of us, but may hereafter be a glorified saint in heaven, equal to the holy angels themselves, in knowledge, in wisdom, in power, in purity, in estate, in honour, in every thing that can satiate and delight our souls for ever.

But that we may all be so, we must, as we have heard, go to him, by a quick and lively faith in him, as our only and almighty Saviour ; and for that purpose, we must walk in all the ways that leads towards him : we must exercise ourselves in praying and praising God, in reading, and hearing, and meditating upon his holy word, in

examining ourselves, and receiving that sacrament which he ordained in memory of that death by which he saves us. It is in the use of these means, that God usually teacheth, and draweth, and giveth us to Christ: and so we go to him, believing, and trusting on him as a Prince and a Saviour, to give us repentance and forgiveness of sins, and all things necessary to our obtaining eternal salvation by him; which he never fails to do, for those who do not fail to trust on him for it, for he never casts out any that come to him. But then we must take care that we do not cast out ourselves, as they do, who renounce their faith, or leave off to believe in him, and by consequence to come to him: for this is no transient act, to be done only once in a man's life; but when it is once begun, it ought to be continued as long as we live: and therefore what he here calls *coming to him*, he elsewhere expresses by *abiding in him*, John xv. 4, 5, 6. *And if ye continue in my word, then, saith he, are ye my disciples indeed*, John-viii. 31. Others may seem to come to him, and to become his disciples, but they only are so indeed, who continue in his word; but they who do so, are sure never to be cast out by him, as sure as his word is true, who cannot lie.

But why did our Lord say, *Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out?* Doubtless he said it, to encourage all men to come to him: wherefore, in his name, I advise and beseech you all to do so, and to do it in good earnest; come off from all indifferency in religion, from all conceit of yourselves, or your own works, from all dependence upon any mere creature, from all your former evil courses, and turn now into the foresaid ways that lead to Christ, and walk directly in them, till ye come up to him, so as to live for the future wholly under his conduct and discipline, and with a constant belief and trust on him; on him only, to save you from your sins, to give you eternal life, and all things necessary in order to it. Do but this, and I dare assure you in his name, and I may well do it, having his own

word for it, that he will not reject, or cast you out, but will take you into his own particular care, and keep you by his almighty power, through faith, unto salvation. He will give you repentance, true repentance, not to be repented of; he will give you power to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil; he will give you grace to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; so that you shall be able to do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth you; and then, how many, how great soever your sins have been, he will wash you from them in his own blood: he will discharge and absolve you from them all, as perfectly as if ye had never been guilty of any one; he will justify you before God, so that you shall for the future be accounted righteous by him, and your duties all acceptable to him; he will reconcile his Father to you, and cause the light of his countenance to shine continually upon you: and when you go out of this miserable and naughty world, he will take you up to himself, to live with him, and his holy angels, in perfect joy, and bliss, and glory, for ever. All this, I say, he will do; or rather, not I, but Christ himself saith it. He did not only say it when he was upon earth, but he saith it also now; for we being here met together in his name, he, according to his word, is here too, as certainly as we are here; and what he once said with his own divine mouth, he now saith again by his unworthy servant, he saith to all here present, *Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.* And if the words of Christ himself, such kind and gracious words as these are, will not encourage and prevail upon you to come to him, I am sure nothing that I can say will do it; and therefore shall say no more, but only desire you to consider of it before it be too late; and I beseech Almighty God to open your hearts, to incline and draw you to him, that ye may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

SERMON XXX.

CHRIST THE ONLY MEDIATOR.

1 TIM. ii. 5.

For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

A MEDIATOR between God and men ! How can that be ? God is infinite and almighty ; men are all finite and infirm : God is the great, all-wise Creator of the whole world ; men are little silly creatures upon earth : God is most perfectly holy and pure ; men are altogether sinful and unclean : God is the Judge, the righteous Judge of heaven and earth ; men are all notorious malefactors, guilty of many horrid crimes against him, and before him too. Who then can mediate between them, who are at such a prodigious, incomprehensible, infinite distance from one another ? What umpire, or, as it is expressed in Job ix. 33. what *daysman* can be found, betwixt them, that can lay his hand upon both, and so bring them together ? Verily, if we look no farther than human reason is able to reach, we cannot see the least shadow of probability that the thing is possible : and yet we have found one that can do it ; or rather not we, but God himself hath found out one for us ; and hath likewise directed us to him, assuring us by his apostle, that 'as certainly as *there is one God*, there is also *one Mediator between God and men* ; and that we may not mistake the person, he tells us who it is, even *the man Christ Jesus*.

But *the man Christ Jesus* ! how can he do it ? If he be only a man, he is at the same infinite distance from God as other men are ; how then can he mediate with God ? And if he be only man, he is also one of those who stand in need to be mediated for himself ; how then can he mediate for men ? and besides, how can he be a mediator, who is infinitely below one of the parties, and not at all above the other ? How can such a one ever bring them together ? No, that cannot be ; neither doth the apostle here say it ; he doth not say, that the Mediator between God and men is only a man ; he only saith, he is *the man Christ Jesus*. And that was enough for him to say in this place, having in many other places declared in the name of God, *that this Christ Jesus is the Son of God, of the same form or substance with the Father*, and so truly God himself : as, where speaking of the Israelites, he saith, *Of whom, concerning the flesh, Christ came ; who is over all, God blessed for ever*, Rom. ix. 5. And elsewhere, *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus ; who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God*, Phil. ii. 5, 6. that is, he did not detract from God, nor rob him of any honour, by asserting himself to be equal to him ; as when he said, *I and the Father are one*, John x. 30. by this he made himself equal with God, and yet did not thereby disparage, dishonour, or undervalue him, as he would have done, if he that said it had not been of the same divine essence and glory with him. There are many such expressions all over the Bible, which clearly and undeniably demonstrate, that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, the only-begotten of the Father, and subsisting in the divine nature, so that he himself also is very God, the same in all his essential properties or perfections with the Father : and therefore, when he is here called *the man Christ Jesus*, it cannot be so understood, as if he was not God ; for that would be a plain contradiction to the rest of the Scriptures, and to this very place too, where he

is said to be the *Mediator between God and men* ; which none can be, unless he be God himself : for he that undertakes to mediate, so as to make up all differences between God and men, he must, of necessity, appease the wrath which God hath justly conceived against men, for the sins which they have committed against him. But who can appease God's anger, but God himself? He is an infinite Being, and all things in the world besides, both singly and jointly, are only finite ; and, by consequence, it is impossible that any of them should ever come near him by themselves, or do any thing whereby to pacify and reconcile him to those with whom he is once offended, as the apostate angels have found by woful experience ; who, although they have as much knowledge, subtlety, and power, as any creatures in the world, yet having once offended God, never yet were, nor ever will be able to assuage his wrath, or obtain his love and favour. And the same would have been the fate of all mankind, if they had not a Mediator of infinite power and wisdom, which none is, or can be, but God himself. This therefore we must lay down, as the foundation both of our religion in general, and especially of that great article in it, which we are now speaking of, that Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and men, is himself the almighty and eternal God.

But why then doth the apostle here call him, *the man Christ Jesus* ? Because, as he was truly God, so he was truly man too. And though in our days there have been some heretics that have denied the Godhead of Christ ; yet in the apostles, and the succeeding age, his manhood was rather questioned : that he was God, was so plainly attested in the Scriptures, so fully confirmed by the miracles he wrought, and so constantly preached by his apostles, that they could not deny that. But the first heretics fell rather into the contrary error, denying him to be truly man ; as the Valentinians, Appelletians, Marcionists, and others, in the very next

age after the apostles; and while the apostles themselves lived and preached, the Gnostics denied that Christ took real flesh upon him, or the true human nature: but that all he did, or was done to him as man, was only in appearance, in fancy, and imagination. *Epiphan. Hær. 26. Tertull. de carne Christi, c. 1. Ignat. Ep. ad Smyrnæos, &c.*

Wherefore, to prevent the growth of this damnable heresy, which began then to spring up in the church, and to undermine the very foundation of it, the apostle having elsewhere sufficiently asserted the Godhead of Christ, he here asserts his manhood. And it was most proper for him to do it in this place, where he speaks of Christ's being the *Mediator between God and men*; which he could not have been, if he had not been man: for as he could not mediate with God, except he was God; so except he was man, he could not have mediated for men; there being many things to be done in order to the perfecting of this mediation, which none could do but he who was truly man himself. And therefore the apostle here calls him *the man*, or, as the Greek word *ἄνθρωπος*, without an article, may be rendered, *man Christ Jesus*; man in general, another Adam, sustaining the whole human nature, and so a proper Mediator for all that partake of that nature.

But here we must observe, that although Christ be both God and man, yet there are not two Mediators, one who is God, and another who is man; but, as the apostle here saith, he is still but one Mediator both as God and man: his Godhead and manhood being so united, as to make but one and the same person, and, by consequence, one and the same Mediator. For, as it is rightly explained in the Athanasian Creed, *As the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ*. This was foretold by the prophet, Isa. vii. 14. saying, *that his name shall be called*, in one word, *Emmanuel, God with us*; that is, as it is expressed in the Greek. *Θεάνθρωπος*, God-man, or God and

man in one person. The same is implied also in his name *Jesus*, which was ordered to be given him before he was born ; for the angel of the Lord said to Joseph, to whom his mother was espoused, *Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife ; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost : and she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus ; for he shall save his people from their sins*, Matt. i. 20, 21. Upon which St. Matthew observes, that this was done, *that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel ; which, being interpreted, is, God with us*, ver 22, 23. where, by calling his name according to the use of that phrase in the Hebrew tongue, we may understand the same as if it had been said, *He shall be Emmanuel, God-man*. And if we take the words in the most obvious and literal sense, as if the prophet meant by them, that he should be named *Emmanuel* ; we may truly say, he was so, in that he was named *Jesus*, which in Hebrew signifies a *Saviour* ; and so, in effect, the same with *Emmanuel*, because no person can be our Saviour, but he that is *God with us* : so that *Jesus* and *Emmanuel* are synonymous terms, or names that signify in effect the same thing. Be sure the prophet, inspired with the Holy Ghost, by saying, that he shall be, or shall be called *Emmanuel, God with us*, hath fully assured us, that he is both God and man in one person ; as it was necessary the Mediator between God and men should be, that his mediation might be effectual : for, as he could not have suffered at all for men, unless he himself was man, or have satisfied God, unless he himself was God ; so he could not have satisfied God for men, so as to reconcile him to them, and bring him, if I may so speak, and them together, unless he himself had been both together in one and the same person. For if he that suffered had been a mere human person of himself, distinct from the

divine, all his sufferings had been the sufferings only of a finite creature, and by consequence no way meritorious for himself, much less satisfactory to the infinite justice of God for the sins of other men: whereas, by being Emmanuel, God and man in one person, he was completely qualified to mediate effectually between them: for by this means, whatsoever he did or suffered in the human nature, being done and suffered by a divine Person, by one who is the infinite God, it could not but be of infinite value and merit with God himself, for those in whose nature it was done and suffered. He shed his blood as man, but he that shed it being God too, in the same person, it was the blood of God himself, as it is expressly called, Acts xx. 28. And therefore it must needs be a sufficient propitiation for the sins of all mankind, or, as the apostle speaks, *of the whole world*, 1 John ii. 2.

This being premised concerning the person of our Mediator, it will give us great light into the work he undertook for us, the methods he used for the accomplishing it, and the grounds we have to believe, and trust on him, to reconcile our almighty Creator to us, and so restore us to the same state of purity and happiness, wherein we were at first created. For the right understanding whereof, we must farther observe, that he who is here called *the Mediator between God and men*, is elsewhere said to be *the Mediator of the new covenant*, Heb. xii. 24. or, as the word is sometimes translated, *the Mediator of the New Testament*, Heb. ix. 15. and *the Mediator of a better covenant*, Heb. viii. 6. From whence it appears, that this office which Christ undertook, of being our Mediator, was grounded upon a certain covenant or agreement, that God was pleased to enter into with men: and that this covenant being called the new, and the better covenant, it supposeth there was another before it, an old, and a worse covenant; worse, not in itself, but in comparison of the new one, *which was established upon better pro-*

mises, Heb. viii. 6. Wherefore, that we may be able to frame a true idea of Christ's mediation for us, it will be necessary to look back upon the first establishment of these two covenants, especially the latter, upon which it was founded.

When God therefore had made man in his own image, enduing him with the power of discerning between good and evil, and of choosing the one before the other, he put him into a garden, which he had planted with all sorts of trees, pleasant to the eye, and good for food, and gave him full liberty to pick and choose where he would, excepting only one tree, saying to him, *Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat : but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat ; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die*, Gen. ii. 16, 17 In which threatening there was a promise also implied, that if he did not eat of that fruit, he should not die, but live : this was the first covenant that God made with man. According to which, if men keep the commandments of God, they shall live, and be happy ; otherwise, they must die, and be miserable for ever. But this covenant was broken soon after it was made ; for Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, and so made himself, and his whole posterity, then contained in him, liable to that death which God had threatened, under which all sorts of punishments were comprehended : and this he did, by his not believing God's word, but hearkening to the devil, who said he should not die, rather than to God, who said he should. By this means, sin and death first came into the world upon all mankind ; because, although there were then no other men or women in the world, but only Adam and Eve, and so none could eat of the forbidden fruit, so as to make it their own personal act, but only they two ; yet seeing all mankind were to proceed from them, and were at that time in their loins, hence all were concluded under the same sin, and as much ob-

noxious to the punishment threatened, as if they had done it every one in his own person.

The first covenant being thus broken, God was pleased to enter into another, established upon better promises ; whereby Adam himself and all mankind might escape the death they have incurred, and live for ever, unless it was every one's own personal fault. For which purpose, the same day that the first Adam fell, God was pleased to set up another Adam, his only-begotten Son, to take the nature of man into his own divine person, as fully and wholly as it was in the first ; and in it, to suffer the death which he had threatened, and so recover mankind into their first estate of life and happiness, upon that easy condition of believing aright in him for it. And that they might have firm ground to do so, he himself was pleased to make the promise, as he had made the threatening before with his own mouth, saying to the serpent that had beguiled the woman, and by her the man too, *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed ; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel*, Gen. iii. 15. Where, by the serpent, we are to understand the said old serpent the devil ; by the seed of the woman, we are to understand, Christ who was born of a woman, only without a man. This seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head ; his upper part, where his life, his subtlety, and his strength lay, and so deprive him of his sting, destroy his works, and turn man again from the power of Satan unto God ; but the seed of the serpent, they who are of their father the devil, shall bruise Christ's heel, his lower part, the human nature that they shall put to death ; but they shall bruise only one heel ; and therefore the other being still whole, he shall rise again, and so overcome the devil, and rescue man from his power and tyranny.

This was the first draught of the new covenant, which was afterwards more fully exemplified, explained, and ra-

tified to Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and the children of Israel, by prophets raised up among them all along for that purpose, until the seed of the woman should be actually born, or Christ should actually take the nature of man upon him. At which time God saith, by his prophet Jeremiah, that he will make a new covenant with the house of Israel: not as if it was not made before, for it had been the new covenant all along; but as it was at first made with mankind in general, it was now renewed, and more clearly revealed to the children of Israel in a more particular manner, because Christ was to be born of one of their kindred, and so they were more nearly related in blood to him as man, than the rest of mankind are. To them therefore God was pleased to give a more full and plain description of this new covenant, than he did to others, till after Christ, in whom it was established, was actually come into the world, and so the promise was actually performed. And this he did by his foresaid prophet, Jer. xxxi. 33, 34. Heb. viii. 10, 11, 12.

This therefore is that better covenant, of which Christ is said to be the Mediator, Heb. viii. 6. and the surety, chap. vii. 22. because he took upon him to see it actually performed on both parts, so as to reconcile God to men, and men to God, according to the tenure of this covenant, which is the proper notion and office of a mediator. But for this purpose, it was first necessary that he should suffer that death which God had threatened to Adam and all mankind, in case they did not obey his commandments; otherwise God's word would not be fulfilled, nor his justice satisfied. And therefore this was one article of the covenant, that the seed of the serpent should bruise his heel, or put his lower part, his human nature, to death; which Christ therefore undertook, even to suffer death in the nature, and so in the stead of mankind, and by that means to be a propitiation for the sins of the world: upon which account he is said to be our Priest, and our High-priest, Heb. viii. 1, &c.

But it was necessary also, that, according to the other clause in the covenant, he should bruise the serpent's head, destroy the works of the devil, overcome his power, and so enable men, notwithstanding all the opposition that he could make against it, to keep all the commandments of God as entirely and sincerely as they in their fallen and imperfect state could do it ; and to make up the defects of theirs, by his own most perfect and divine obedience to the whole law : so that God might be satisfied for the dishonour he had received by their breaking his law, and likewise might have perfect obedience, for the future, performed to it. For the attaining of which end, Christ undertook also to reveal the whole will of God to mankind, that they might know what to do, and likewise to give them power to do it ; and so to be our Prophet, and our King, as well as Priest : in the execution of which three offices, the whole work of his mediatorship consisted. And therefore he began to execute them from the beginning, and will continue to do so to the end of the world, that all mankind might have the benefit of his mediation ; who, as the apostle saith, *is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever*, Heb. xiii. 8. Hence therefore, that we may fully understand what Christ, as our mediator, hath done, or still does for us, we must consider each of these three offices which he undertook for our sakes. We shall begin with his priesthood : the priest's office, ye know, was to offer sacrifices to God, and by them to make atonement for the sins of the people. Now this Christ did, by offering up himself as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind : in this it is that his mediation is founded, and by this it is made effectual ; and therefore the apostle having said in my text, *there is one Mediator between God and man*, he adds in the next verse, *who gave himself a ransom for all* ; or, as the words $\delta\ \delta\epsilon\ \upsilon\varsigma\ \epsilon\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu$, may be rendered, having given himself a ransom ; it being by this especially that he mediates with God for us. But here are two things more to be observed ; first, that the word $\alpha\ \nu\tau\iota\lambda\upsilon\tau\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$

signifies such a ransom as is given instead of the thing ransomed, as head for head, goods for goods, life for life; and so it imports, that Christ gave his life instead of ours, suffering that death in our nature, which we were otherwise bound to have suffered in our own persons: and, secondly, that he did this for all, or instead of all; and, by consequence, for Adam himself, and all mankind from the beginning, as well as to the end of the world; and therefore is called, *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*, Apoc. xiii. 8. that is, from the time that the first promise of it, or the new covenant, before spoken of, was made. Then Christ undertook to pay this ransom, by dying in the stead of mankind; which therefore took place immediately, as much as if it had been then done. As it is in other ransoms; when a slave or captive, as suppose in Turkey, is to be redeemed, if his ransom be agreed upon, and security given for the payment of it, the captive is immediately set at liberty, although the ransom be not paid in a month, or perhaps some years after: how much more in this case, where the Son of God himself had engaged his word, that he would, at the time agreed upon, die for the sins of the world, and so pay the full price for man's redemption! That was every way as good and effectual, as if he had died that very moment: and so, from that time forward, Adam, and his whole posterity, were capable of being redeemed by the blood of Christ, (if they would but lay hold of it,) although it was not actually shed till many years after.

But how then comes it to pass, that all men are not redeemed by it? The reason is, because they will not believe it. For we must observe, that this new covenant was made by way of promise; but what God promiseth, we are bound to believe, otherwise to make him a liar: and therefore it was sufficiently implied in the covenant itself, that the condition required on our parts is to believe it; and we are fully assured of it by Christ himself, laying the whole stress of our redemption, by him,

upon our believing in him ; as where he saith, *that God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*, John iii. 16. *He that believeth on him, is not condemned ; but he that believeth not, is condemned already*, ver. 18. *He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved ; but he that believeth not, shall be damned*, Mark xvi. 16. And so, all along in the Gospel. Wherefore, they who do not believe in Christ, and depend upon him to be their Mediator and Saviour, they do not perform the easy condition, the easiest that could be required on their parts in the covenant, and therefore cannot possibly receive any benefit by it: neither is there any reason they should, seeing they will not take God's word, nor believe what he, who cannot lie, hath said ; and so destroy themselves again, as their first parents did, by their unbelief.

Seeing therefore, that although Christ hath paid a sufficient price for the redemption of mankind, yet, nevertheless, the application of it to particular persons depends upon their believing in him for it ; hence he hath taken care all along, to put men in mind of him, and his death for them, that so they might act their faith in him. From the beginning of the world he appointed bloody sacrifices to be offered, to foreshew and typify that which he was to offer for them. And when he was to offer up himself, and so put an end to all those typical sacrifices, he, the very night before he did it, instituted a sacrament, to shew it forth, and continue the remembrance of it to the end of the world ; that mankind might always have him evidently set forth as crucified before their eyes, and so might always look upon him as their Mediator, and believe and trust on him, to reconcile Almighty God, their Maker, to them : for which he is so fully qualified, by the great propitiation which he hath made for their sins in his own blood. By virtue whereof, he still continues our High-

priest, making intercession with the Father in heaven for us ; which was typified in the old law, by the high-priest's carrying the blood of the sacrifice he had offered once a year into the holy of holies, and with it making atonement there for the sins of the people. But, as the apostle observes, *Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true ; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us*, Heb. ix. 24. There he now is, in that very body which he offered up for us. In it he appears before God, not for himself, but for us ; and therefore, if we do not believe on him, and apply ourselves to God, by him, as we ought, we shall find, by our own experience, the truth of what we have now heard, even that he is a most effectual Mediator for us, *able to save to the utmost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them*, Heb. vii. 25.

Christ having thus, by giving himself a ransom for all, made full atonement and propitiation for the sins of the whole world, God, for his sake, is so gracious, propitious, and merciful to mankind, as to pardon and forgive the sins we have committed against him, so soon as we repent of them, so as never to exact of us the punishment which was due unto him for them. But that we may not only escape death, but be fully restored to the favour of God, and to that state of bliss and happiness in which he at first created us, it is necessary, that, for the future, we should keep all his commandments ; which we can never do, unless we first know them. And therefore Christ, as our Mediator, was pleased to take upon him also the office of a prophet, to instruct mankind in the will of God, John xv. 15. And that he hath done all along from the beginning of the world, and will do it to the end ; as appears from his empowering his apostles, and their successors, to teach all nations all things that he had commanded ; assuring them, that he himself would be with them to the end of the world, Matt. xxviii. 20. And as he was, and

will be with the apostles and their successors, to the end of the world, so he was with the prophets, their predecessors, from the beginning of it. It was he who inspired the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament with the knowledge of God's will, and endued them with power to make it known to others, 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. It was he who enabled them to foretel things to come, especially such as related to himself: it was he that moved the holy men of old when they spake; and it was his Holy Spirit they meant, when they said, *Thus saith the Lord*: it was he, who, when he was upon earth, vindicated the law of God, from the false glosses which the Scribes and Pharisees had put upon it, and acquainted mankind with all things necessary to be known, concerning either the Law or the Gospel: it was he, who, after he was ascended to heaven, *gave some apostles, some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ*, Eph. iv. 11, 12. It was he, therefore, whom Moses meant, when he said, *The Lord thy God will raise unto thee a prophet, from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto thee; unto him shall ye hearken*, Deut. xviii. 15, 18. Acts iii. 22. To him therefore we must hearken, and observe whatsoever he hath said, if we desire to understand the whole will of God; and *every soul that will not hearken to this prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people*, Deut. xvii. 19. Acts iii. 23.

But, although Christ be called and really is a prophet, properly so called, yet we must not think him only such a one as the prophets of the Old or New Testament were; for, as all the sacrifices of God's appointment were only his sacrifice in type and figure, so all other prophets prophesied only in his name, and by his authority; it was he that spake by them, 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. And whatsoever they said in the audience of the people, went no farther than their ears, unless he himself was pleased, by his almighty power, to send it home into

their hearts ; it being his great prerogative, to speak to the hearts as well as to the ears of men : as when he called his apostles, he only said, *Follow me* ; and they no sooner heard the words, but immediately they left all, and followed him. But whatsoever men say, though it be in his name, unless he himself be pleased to influence and enforce it with his own especial grace, it hath no effect at all upon those who hear it ; they only hear it sounding in their ears, but their hearts are no way affected with it. And therefore, when he gave his apostles, and in them all succeeding ministers, their commission to propagate his Gospel among all nations, and teach them his commandments, he promised to be always with them himself in the doing it : *And, lo, saith he, I am with you to the end of the world*, Matt. xxviii. 20. Without which, all their preaching would have signified nothing : whereas, by it whole nations were soon converted to the faith.

And so it is to this day : all the virtue and efficacy that there is in the ministry of Christ's word, comes from him, whose word it is ; not from the word itself, or those who minister it : we are only *ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us ; we pray you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God*, 2 Cor. v. 20. And therefore, if you be prevailed upon by what you hear from us, you must not thank us, but him who sent us ; for Paul himself may plant, and Apollos water, it is God only that gives the increase, 1 Cor. iii. 7 even God the Son. It was he that opened Lydia's heart, *that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul*, Acts xvi. 14. In like manner, when in hearing of his holy word, you receive it in the love of it, it is he that inflames you with love to it : when you are pricked in the heart, and convinced of your sins by it, it is he that convinceth you : when you are put upon holy resolutions by it to serve and obey God, it is he that puts you upon them : when you are turned by it from darkness to light, from the power of Satan

unto God, it is he that turns you : when your minds are enlightened, so as to see the wonderful things in God's word, it is he that enlightens them, who is the true light that lightens every one *that cometh into the world*, John i. 9. When your faith is strengthened and confirmed in him, it is he himself that confirms and strengthens it, who, as his apostle saith, is both *the author and finisher of our faith*, Heb. xii. 2. And so, whensoever you feel yourselves touched and affected with what you hear, you must ascribe it wholly to him, the great Prophet of the world, whose word it is, and whose power alone can make it effectual to the ends for which he hath appointed it ; he being the only Mediator between God and man, without whom the word of God would never have been preached to us, nor do us any good when it is.

But what saith the apostle ? *Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified*, Rom. ii. 13. Whatsoever light or knowledge we have of God's will, unless we have power likewise to do it, we shall be never the better for it. Hence therefore ; Christ our Mediator, as he undertook to be a Prophet, to instruct and teach us, so likewise to be our King, to rule and govern us : David calls him *a King*, Psal. ii. 6. and the prophet Isaiah hath given us a large description of his kingdom, with the extraordinary properties and prerogatives belonging to it, and to him as the head of it, Isa. ix. 6, 7. It is true, he himself saith, that his *kingdom is not of this world*, John xviii. 36. but though it be not of this world, it is in it, and hath been so from the beginning of it. He is that God of peace, who, as the apostle speaks, bruiseth Satan under our feet, Rom. xvi. 20. and hath done so all along from the first promise, that he should bruise the serpent's head : neither doth he exercise this his regal authority only over the prince of darkness, and the powers of hell, but over all things else ; for God *hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be*

head over all things to the church, Eph. i. 22. The church he purchased with his own blood, and therefore hath an absolute right and title to be head and governor of it: and for the sake of that, he is likewise the head and governor over all things else, that he may be able to order and dispose of all things so, that nothing may be able to destroy or hurt his church, but all things work together for its good; and not only for the good of the church in general, but of all and every particular member thereof. And as we make all things else concur to do them good, he himself doth them most good of all: he quickens and actuates them with the influences of his own Holy Spirit: he guides them by his counsel, and directs them by his wisdom, to such things as are most pleasing to God: he enables them to resist the devil, to overcome the world, and to do good in it: he assists them in doing their whole duty, and intercedes for them, that God would accept of it when it is done: he keeps off all things that may hinder their salvation, and supplies him with all things necessary to it. His grace is always sufficient for them: his strength is made perfect in their weakness, and his power rests continually upon them, whereby he carries them through all the changes and chances of this mortal life; and so at length brings them to himself in glory. All this he doth for all who truly believe in him, and so are his faithful and obedient subjects.

But that we may take a better prospect of that regal power, which is vested in Christ, and is exercised by him, as he is the Mediator between God and man; we must further observe, that by this power, when he was upon earth, he prescribed laws peculiar to his own kingdom, and ordained sacraments in it. By this he commanded the devils themselves to depart out of persons possessed, and diseases from such as were afflicted with them: by this he sent his apostles, and his ambassadors, into all nations, to bring them over to his kingdom: by this, at his ascension into heaven, he led captivity

captive, and gave gifts unto men ; and, among others, the gift of working miracles in his name : by this he presides over angels, archangels, principalities, powers, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come : by this he hath propagated his church all over the earth, and made whole nations submit unto his government : by this he defends his church so propagated against all the machinations both of men and devils ; so that according to his promise, the very gates of hell cannot prevail against it : by this he gathers together all his faithful people into one body, and appoints them their several places and stations in it : by this he constitutes some his vicegerents, to govern them in his name ; others effectually to administer his word and sacraments to them : by this he keeps them always in his true faith, in constant subjection to himself, and sincere obedience to his laws : by this he protects them from all their spiritual enemies, the world, the devil, and the flesh ; and gives them power to overcome them : by this he delivers them from all their troubles, or disposeth them so as to make them turn to their advantage : by this his royal power, he will one day summon all mankind that ever lived, from the beginning to the end of the world, kings and emperors themselves, as well as others, he will summon them all to appear before his tribunal, there to give an account to him of all their actions : by this he will then condemn all that would not believe in him, and obey his laws, *to that everlasting fire, that is prepared for the devil and his angels* : and by this he will advance all his faithful and obedient subjects to the highest heavens, there to live and reign with him for ever ; for *of his kingdom there shall be no end*, Luke i. 33.

These are the three offices which the Son of God undertook, and in our nature executes for us, and by that means mediates most effectually between God and us. By the first he hath satisfied God's justice for our sins ; by the second he hath revealed his will to us ;

and by the third he gives us power to perform it. By the one he hath paid our debts ; by the other he assures that he hath done it, that we may believe in him ; and by the last, upon our believing aright in him, he dischargeth and acquits us from it. As our Priest, he purchased redemption for us ; as our Prophet, he makes known the terms and conditions of it to us ; and as our King, he confers it actually upon us : and so as our Priest, our Prophet, and our King, doth all things that can possibly be required, both to the reconciling of God to us, and us to him ; and therefore is a most proper and effectual Mediator between God and men.

From what we have hitherto discoursed upon this great subject, we may learn many useful lessons, very worthy of a Christian's notice. As first, from hence we may learn, that as there is but one God, so there is but one Mediator between God and men, and that is, the man Christ Jesus, who saith himself, *I am the way, the truth, and the life ; no man cometh unto the Father but by me*, John xiv. 16. All other men need a mediator, only he needs none himself, and therefore he only can mediate for other men. And besides, none but he is capable of the office, because none but he hath any thing of his own, which he can plead before God in the behalf of mankind. But he hath all the merits of his own most perfect obedience, which he performed to death itself, even the death of the cross. It is upon this that his mediation is grounded ; and therefore seeing none but he ever died for men, none but he can mediate with God, so as to reconcile him to them. From hence we may also learn, what cause we have to abhor and avoid the doctrine and practice of the Church of Rome, in praying to the Virgin Mary, and other saints, to mediate and intercede with God for them : which, as it is a great dishonour to our ever-blessed Saviour, so it is of very dangerous consequence to those who are guilty of it : for seeing they leave Christ, and fly to his saints for succour, they have no ground to expect that

he should save them; and if he doth not save them, I am sure they can never be saved at all. I know that to palliate this absurd and pernicious doctrine, they have invented a distinction of a mediator of redemption, and a mediator of intercession; but this distinction hath no foundation either in Scripture or reason, but is rather contrary to both: to Scripture, which sets forth only one Mediator; and to reason, which plainly shews that none can effectually intercede for us, but he who first redeemed us with his own blood, and so hath purchased our peace with God.

Again, from hence we may learn how it comes to pass that God is so merciful to fallen men, and not to the fallen angels: these are his own creatures as well as men, and are as miserable, and so as great objects of mercy, as we are; yet their almighty Maker never yet did, nor ever will, shew them any mercy. The reason is, because they have no Mediator, as we have; *for Christ took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham*, Heb. ii. 16. If he had taken on him the nature of angels, and so died for them, God would have been merciful to them, and not to us; but seeing he took not on him their nature, but ours, therefore God is merciful to us, and not to them: so that we are beholden to Christ for every mercy we enjoy. It is he that obtains it of the Father for us, and it is he that takes care to bestow it upon us. It is he that mediates between God and us, and therefore it is by his means that we receive any favour at the hands of God; inso-much, that without him we had never known what mercy is, but had been all utterly lost and undone for ever; whereas by him there is no mercy, no blessing, no grace, nothing at all that can either do us or make us good, but we may have it. And whatsoever we have, we are still bound to thank him for it, and to look upon it as coming from God, by means of his mediation for us.

Moreover, from hence we may learn, to whom we must apply ourselves for pardon, and for peace with God

and our own consciences. We must go to Christ, who bids all those, who are weary and heavy laden with their sins, come to him, and promiseth to give them rest, Matt. xi. 28. It is he alone can do it: and therefore his beloved apostle saith, *If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins*, 1 John ii. 1. As if he had said, if any man be sensible of his sin, and ready to fall into despair for it, let him remember that we have an Advocate or Mediator in heaven, Jesus Christ the righteous, who hath expiated our sins with his own blood. This is the only comfort and support to a troubled mind. Neither do I see, how it is possible to keep up our spirits under the sense of our sins any other way, but by a firm belief that we have a Mediator in heaven, always interceding for us: but this is sufficient of itself to do it. For whatsoever sins we have committed, let us but repent, and believe in Christ, for the pardon of them, and we need not doubt but he will obtain it for us. And so *being justified by faith, we shall have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus*, Rom. v. 1.

From hence we may further learn how to pray, so as always to receive any good thing we ask: we must ask it only in the name of our Mediator Jesus Christ, who hath assured us with his own mouth, *that whatsoever we ask the Father in his name, he will give it us*, John xvi. 23. and, by consequence, we have no ground to expect any thing at the hands of God, unless we ask it in the name of Christ. And that is the reason why men pray so often to no purpose, because they do not pray aright: they do not ask in the name of Christ, and then it is no wonder they ask in vain; it being impossible for us to receive any kindness at the hands of God, but only upon his account, who is always mediating with the Father for us. And we cannot expect that he should intercede for our having the mercy we ask, unless we ask it in his name, and trust on him to do it for us.

And therefore, as we do it constantly in our public devotions, so in our private too ; whatsoever we want, we must ask it only in the name of Christ, and beseech God to grant it only for his sake : and if we do that heartily and faithfully, as we ought, we can never miss of any thing we ask, that is truly good for us.

From hence also we may learn, how all the duties we perform may be acceptable to God, even if we trust in Christ to make them so, by perfuming them with the incense of his merits and mediation for us ; for then he will smell a sweet savour from them, otherwise not : for St. Peter tells us, that they are *acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*, and by him only, 1 Pet. ii. 5. And therefore, when we have performed any duty, we must lift up our minds to Christ, and trust on him to intercede for us, that God would be pleased to accept of what we have done for his sake ; and then we may rest satisfied in our minds, that it is accepted : for, as Christ never fails to intercede for those who believe and trust on him for it, so God never denies any thing that he asketh, John xi. 42.

From hence likewise we may learn how much it concerns us to observe and believe whatsoever he, our great Prophet, hath revealed to us, and to perform whatsoever he, our sovereign Lord and King, hath required of us ; that so we may keep in with him, and enjoy the benefit of his mediation.

Particularly, we may learn from hence how much we are bound, both in duty and interest, to frequent that holy sacrament, which he hath ordained in memory of that death he suffered in our stead : whereby he is so perfectly qualified to mediate between God and us, that by often commemorating of it, we may the better act our faith in him, to make our peace with God, and continue us in his love and favour.

From hence again we may learn, what firm ground we have, to live with a constant trust and dependence upon Christ, to justify us before God, to mortify our

sins, to purify our hearts, to assist us in all our duties, to keep us from evil, to bless and sanctify all occurrences to us, to guide and direct us in all our ways, and to give us all things necessary to our salvation, seeing he is so all-sufficient a Saviour and so effectual a Mediator between God and us.

Lastly, from hence we may learn what cause, what infinite cause we have to rejoice and be glad that we have such a Mediator, and to bless and magnify the eternal Son of God, for undertaking so great and glorious a work for us. Let us therefore now put our whole trust and confidence on him, and devote ourselves entirely to his service. Let us love and honour him with our whole souls, and long to be with him, that we may behold his face, and enjoy him for ever. In the mean while, let us give him our most hearty thanks, and say, *To him that loved us, and gave himself for us ; to him that washed us from our sins in his own blood, and is always making intercession for us ; to him that is the only Mediator between God and men ; to him, the eternal Son of God, with the Father and Holy Ghost, be glory, &c.*

SERMON XXXI.

ALL THINGS TO BE ASKED IN THE NAME OF CHRIST.

JOHN xiv. 14.

If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

AMONG the many duties required in our holy religion, there is none more acceptable to God, nor of greater use and benefit to us, than prayer duly performed : by that we give God the glory of his omniscience in hearing, the glory of his mercy in granting, and the glory of his power in effecting, what we desire : by that we draw near to the supreme Governor of the world, and enjoy communion with him : by that we may avert whatsoever evil we fear, remove any evil we feel, and obtain whatsoever is good, either for ourselves or others. And therefore, it must needs behove us very much to understand how to perform this duty aright, as well as to perform it accordingly : which that we may, we must take our measures only from God's own word, who best knows what kind of prayer he will accept, and answer ; and hath there given us such directions about it, that if we do not fail in observing them, we can never fail of praying so as to find grace and favour in his sight. But that which he layeth the most stress upon, and to which all his other directions may be referred, is, that we pray in the name of Jesus Christ ; for if we do that, notwithstanding our other failures, (as in this imperfect

state we are subject to many, even in our best duties,) he hath promised to grant what we pray for: *If ye shall ask any thing*, saith he, *in my name, I will do it.*

For our better understanding of which words, it will be necessary to look back a little, to see how they are brought in. Our great Lord and Master Jesus Christ here saith, *I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me*: ver. 6. whereby he plainly distinguisheth himself from the Father, asserting himself to be the way, the only way whereby a man can go unto the Father. But then he afterward saith, *If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also*, ver. 7 and, *He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father*, ver. 9. *Believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me*, ver. 10, 11. Whereby he gives us also to understand, as plainly as words can do it, that though he be a distinct person from the Father, yet he is in the Father, and the Father in him; so as that whosoever knoweth or seeth the Son, knoweth and seeth the Father also: and, by consequence, that he and the Father are one, according to what he himself elsewhere saith, *I and the Father are one*, John x. 30. *ἐν ἑσμεν*, we are one thing, one Jehovah; though they be two distinct persons, they are one and the same God.

By this we may apprehend something of the great mystery, how we go unto the Father by his Son Christ. The infinite and eternal God, we know, is infinitely above us mortal and finite creatures, *dwelling in that light which no man can approach unto*, 1 Tim. vi. 16. But he in the person of the Son, having taken *upon him the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of men*, Phil. ii. 7 of the same form or nature that all mankind is of; we by faith, first laid hold upon him as he is man, of the same nature with us; and by him, as he is God also, of the same nature with the Father, we get up to God, or, as he himself here words it, *by him we come unto the Father*: and if we do that, we shall certainly be saved, for, as his apostle tells us, *he is able*

to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, Heb. vii. 25. For by this means we, through him, receive from God himself power to do the works of God, and whatsoever we can desire that is necessary to our obtaining eternal salvation by him : and therefore having revealed these great truths to us, he adds, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do, shall he do also ; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father*, ver. 12. Because he went unto the Father to appear in the presence of God, and to make intercession for them ; therefore all that believe on him, shall by him, and his almighty power, do as great, and in some sense greater works than he did in his state of humiliation upon earth, where he exerted no more of his power than what was necessary at that time, and expedient for the state he was then in.

And for the same reason, even because he went unto the Father, he therefore adds also, *and whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son*, ver 13. As if he had said, When I am gone from you to the Father, do not mistrust my care and concern for you, but whatsoever ye want, do but ask it in my name, and I will do it, for the glory of God the Father, that he may be glorified by me when I am with him in heaven, as he hath been, and still is, while I am with you upon earth. And then he repeats the same thing almost in the same words again, saying, *If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*

He saith the same thing over again, that we may take the more notice of it. He knew how apt mankind was, and still would be, to make use of other names besides his in their prayers to God ; as we see many at this day pray in the name of the blessed Virgin, and other saints, which they suppose to be in heaven, desiring and expecting to be heard by their mediation or intercession for them. To prevent which, as much as it was possi-

ble, our Lord tells us over and over again, that what we ask in his name he will do it ; but not that he will do what we ask in any other name. There is not one word in the Gospel, or in all the Scriptures, than can be wrested to such a sense : and therefore they who pray in any other name, cannot possibly pray in faith ; for they have not the word of God to build their faith upon for it. But that what we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, he will do it, we have his own word ; and that too, not only once, but again, that we might have strong consolation, and be the more fully assured of it.

Neither doth he repeat it only here, but in another place again, chap. xv. 16. and again, saying with an high asseveration, to confirm our faith as much as possible in it ; *Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you*, John xvi. 23. It is true, he here saith, *the Father will give it* ; but in my text, *that he himself will do it* : but the promise is still the same, not only in that the thing itself is promised to be done, and it is no matter whether it be by the one or the other ; but chiefly because, whether the Father or the Son do it, it is one and the same God that doth it : *and what one doth, the other doth also* ; when he saith, *that he will do it*, he doth not thereby exclude the Father ; and when he saith, *that the Father will give it*, he doth not thereby exclude himself. But in one place he mentions the one, in another place the other, to shew that both do it alike : and that we are equally beholden both to the Father and to the Son for it. But in my text he seems to name himself particularly, saying, *I will do it* ; to teach us, that we should direct our prayers to him also, as the same God with the Father ; to trust on him for the doing what we pray for ; and to believe, that it is he that doth it ; or, which is the same, the Father in and through him, and for his sake only.

I thought good to premise thus much concerning the words in general, the better to prepare you for the

resolution of whatsoever may seem doubtful in them. Now there are but two things which any one can pretend to be so : first, what it is to ask any thing in the name of Jesus Christ : and then, in what sense he here saith, that if we thus ask any thing in his name, he will do it.

As for the first, the name of Jesus Christ, howsoever it is slighted by wicked men on earth, it is of great request and esteem with God in heaven, far above all other names : for God hath given him a name that is above every name ; *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth*, Phil. ii. 9, 10. *The angels in heaven worship him*, Heb. i. 6. The devils in hell dread his name, and dare not but come out of persons they have possessed, at the faithful mention of it. St. Paul had no sooner said to one of them, *I command thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her*, but he immediately came out, Acts xvi. 18. Matt. vii. 22. Mark ix. 38. Luke x. 17 By this also St. Peter cured the lame man ; he only said, *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk ; and the man presently rose up and walked*, Acts iii. 6, 8. Yea, of so great power and efficacy is this great and most glorious name, that we must do every thing in it, as ever we desire it should be well done : *Whatsoever ye do*, saith the apostle, *in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus ; giving thanks to God and the Father by him*, Col. iii. 17 Especially in our addresses to Almighty God, we must make mention of his name only, asking what we want of him for the sake of Jesus Christ, and upon his account only ; believing that though we be unworthy of any mercy in ourselves, yet for his sake God will grant us all the good things we pray for. This is properly to pray in the name of Jesus Christ. But for the clearer explication of it, I shall search into the bottom of it, and lay it as open as I can, in these few propositions,

1. God sheweth no mercy, that we read of, to ~~any~~ of his creatures that offend him, without having propitiation or satisfaction made him for their offences. This appears plainly from the apostate angels, who are his creatures as well as men; and yet there being no propitiation made for their sins, he hath *cast them all down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment*, without any hopes of mercy, 2 Pet. ii. 4.

2. Jesus Christ having assumed our nature, and died in it, and so being a propitiation for the sins of mankind, God is pleased to be propitious or merciful unto men in him, and upon the account of what he hath suffered for their sins. This is implied in the very notion of propitiation, and the Greek word *ἰλασμός*, used by the apostle to that purpose, 1 John ii. 2. iv. 10. And the same apostle in his Gospel tells us, that *the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*, John i. 17. The original word is *ἐγένετο*, it existed, it was brought as it were into being by him; so that without him there would have been no grace or mercy in the world: but by Jesus Christ not only mercy came, but together with that truth also. For,

3. Almighty God being thus become gracious and merciful to mankind in Jesus Christ, in him he hath been pleased to enter into covenant with us, and to promise us all sorts of blessings, or all things that are really good for us. *In thee*, saith he to Abraham, *and in thy seed*, that is, in Christ, *shall all the families or nations of the earth be blessed*, Gen. xii. 3. xxii. 18. And accordingly, as St. Paul saith, *he hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, or things in Christ*, Eph. i. 3. *For it was in Christ that the covenant was established and confirmed*, Gal. iii. 17. *And all the promises of God in him are Yea, and in him Amen*, 2 Cor. i. 20. that is, in him they are all truth; every one of them being in him a certain and infallible truth, that cannot but hold good, *to the glory of God*

by us, saith the apostle: forasmuch as the glory of his truth most clearly shineth forth in the promises which he hath made to mankind; which promises being made only in Christ, it is by him only that the truth of God appears in the world. So that, as the evangelist saith, *not only grace or mercy, but truth also, came by Jesus Christ*: but first grace, and then truth; grace in making, and truth in fulfilling the promises which are made to us.

4. Hence God's faithful people in all ages had respect to Christ, and to the promises made in him, whensoever they asked any mercy or blessing from God. This they plainly shewed, by offering up their prayers and supplications, together with such sacrifices as typified and represented the death of Christ, that great propitiatory sacrifice, whereby he, the Lamb of God, took away the sins of the world. As Samuel offered a lamb for a whole burnt-offering to the Lord; *and he cried unto the Lord for Israel, and the Lord heard him*, 1 Sam. vii. 9. God himself commanded Job's three friends to take a burnt-offering, and go to his servant Job and offer it up, and he should pray for them, Job xliii. 8. See also, 1 Sam. xiii. 12. Ezra vi. 10. Baruch i. 10, 11. 1 Macc. xii. 11. And it is very observable, that their daily public prayers were always made at the time of the morning and evening sacrifice; when the priest, by God's own appointment, took a censer full of burning coals from off the altar whereon the sacrifices were offered, and carrying it to the altar of incense, he there put the sweet incense upon the coals, which by its rising up towards heaven, and the sweetness of its scent, typified Christ's ascension into heaven, and the intercession he there makes, as the sacrifices typified his death and passion: and all the while the incense was burning, the people were praying; as we learn from St. Luke, saying, *and the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense*, Luke i. 10. as also from 2 Chron. xxix. 27, 28, 29. which shews that they had, or at least

ought to have had, in all their prayers, an eye to the merits and mediation of the promised Messiah or Christ, represented by the sacrifices and incense that were then offered.

The same thing appears also from the sacrifices being offered, and their devotions performed always before the ark, where God our Saviour resided in a wonderful manner between the cherubims, over the mercy-seat; both while the ark was carried about in the tabernacle, and when it was fixed in the temple, which Solomon built upon Mount Sion at Jerusalem: therefore called *the holy hill*, because Christ there sat as king, Psal. ii. 6. By which means their prayers were offered up in his name, as there specially present; which they believed so necessary to render their prayers acceptable to God, that wheresoever they were, they still looked that way when they prayed. As we read of Daniel while he was at Babylon, that *when he knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed*, Dan. vi. 10. For why should his windows be then open towards Jerusalem, but to shew that he had respect to him who was wont to sit there, as the only person by whom his prayers could be accepted, and his petitions granted?

Thus also when David speaks, as he often doth in the Psalms, of Jerusalem, of Zion, of the temple, or the altar, or of God as sitting between the cherubims, it is plain he had an eye to him who sat there; so he had also, when in his prayers to God he calls him the God of his righteousness, the God of his salvation, his deliverer, his redeemer, his strength, his rock, his defence, his God: and when he prays God to hear him for his name's sake, for his mercy's sake, according to the multitude of his mercies, and the like; these are all expressions of his faith in Christ, and his way or manner of praying in his name, in whom alone God hath promised to be our God, and

to be merciful to us. And therefore David prays to him to accept his prayers, saying, *Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer*, Psalm xix. 14. Daniel also prays in his name as plainly as we can do it now, saying, *Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake*, Dan. ix. 17 that is, as we say now, *for the Lord Christ's sake*; for no other lord can possibly be there meant. To which we may add a remarkable passage in the book of Ecclesiasticus, which was certainly written many years before our Saviour's incarnation; there Jesus, the son of Sirach, begins his prayer thus: *I will thank thee, O Lord and King, and praise thee, O God my Saviour*, Ecclus. li. 1. And soon after saith, *I called upon the Lord, the Father of my Lord, that he would not leave me in the days of my trouble*, ver. 10. Where he speaks as plainly of our Lord Christ as David did, when he said, *The Lord said unto my Lord*, Psal. cx. 1. Matt. xxii. 43, 44, 45. And as plainly gives us to understand, that not only the prophets, but all God's faithful people in those days, believed the Lord, the Almighty God, to be the Father of one who was himself also the Lord, and in a peculiar manner their Lord and Saviour; and that in their prayers they had respect to him, and prayed in his name, calling upon the Lord as the Father of their Lord Christ, and so expecting to be heard only upon his account, and for his sake, who was promised by the name of *the Lord*, and *Messiah the prince*, Dan. ix. 25.

5. But now, under the New Testament, we must not ask only in the name of Christ, but in the name of Jesus Christ, believing Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God, and Saviour of the world, so often promised and foretold by the prophets: for this is the only difference between their faith and ours; they believed in

Christ as then to come, we believe in him as already come, and that Jesus of Nazareth is the person: and must therefore now accordingly pray in his name as such, which they under the law did not. As our Lord himself intimates to his disciples, where, speaking of their praying in his name, he saith, *Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name*, John xvi. 24. I know these words have much puzzled interpreters; but in this sense they are plain and easy: though they had all along prayed in the name of the promised Messiah, or Christ, yet hitherto they had not prayed in his name, in the name of Jesus, as the Christ that was promised. But this we must now do, as ever we desire to have what we pray for; for he here promiseth to do what we ask in his name, but nothing else. Hence it is, that his church hath all along concluded their prayers, as we do every one of the collects in our public liturgy, with the mention of his name, except St. Chrysostom's, and two or three more, which are directed to himself, and so are made all over in his name. And as the Jews always performed their public devotions at the place where they offered sacrifices, as types of the death which Christ was to suffer; so Christians performed theirs at the altar, the place where they administered the holy sacrament, in memory of that death which Jesus suffered, the better to exercise their faith in him, for the obtaining of what they prayed for in his name.

And verily, it is well for us, that we have such a name as his to pray in; otherwise, I do not see with what confidence we could expect, or so much as ask any thing that is good of God: for he is a great, glorious, immense, almighty, omniscient, immutable, incomprehensible, infinite, eternal Being, wisdom, glory, goodness, purity, perfection itself; he rules and reigns, and doth whatsoever he pleaseth in heaven and earth, with every thing that is in the world. And who are we, that we should take upon us to speak to him? We, who were made by him, and live continually upon him, and

yet continually offend him ! We sinful dust and ashes, who deserve nothing but wrath and vengeance, hell and damnation from him ! Who are we, that we should take the boldness to ask any thing of him, and expect that he should grant it ? Certainly, in ourselves we have not the least shadow of any pretence for it, but should rather call for the mountains, if it were possible, to cover us, and for the hills to hide us from him, than dare to speak unto him, or so much as come into his presence. Neither can any, or all the creatures in the world, help us ; for they are all as much below him as we ourselves are. What then shall we do ? Blessed be his great name, as *there is one God, there is one Mediator between God and us, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all*, 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6. and by that means hath not only redeemed us from all the curses which were due to us, but hath also purchased for us all sorts of blessings, all the good things that we can possibly desire. And he is now at the right-hand of God in heaven, there mediating and interceding, that we may have them upon our asking them in his name, and upon the account of that price which he hath given for them : and he being God as well as man, is present wheresoever we are, hears what we say, looks into our very hearts, and observes how they stand affected towards him all the while we are at prayer, so as most perfectly to know whether we ask any thing really in his name, and for his sake only, believing, trusting, relying upon him alone, and his all-sufficient merits and mediation for it. And if we do that, he here promiseth that we shall have it, yea, that he himself will do it : *If ye shall ask any thing, saith he, in my name, I will do it.*

But in what sense this is to be understood, is the next question to be resolved ; and it may well be made a question, forasmuch as there have been many in all ages, and still are, whose experience seems to contradict what is here said. We have prayed, say they, for many

things, and have asked them in the name of Christ, constantly using his name in all our prayers, and yet have not obtained what we have asked in it ; how then is this promise fulfilled ? How can we believe these words to be true, when we have found the contrary by our own experience, even that he hath not done what we have asked in his name ? To that I answer in the apostle's words, *Let God be true, and every man a liar*, Rom. iii. 4. And in those of our blessed Saviour, *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away*, Matt. xxiv. 25. Whatsoever men may say, or think, or find ; whatsoever Christ hath said, cannot but be true, as he said it. And the only reason why men do not alway see into the truth of what he said, is, because they do not carefully observe when, to whom, and how he said it : they take the words in general, only as they appear at first sight, without looking particularly into every one of them ; whereas, be sure there is not the least word ever came out of his divine mouth, but what hath great weight and emphasis. And if we thus particularly consider these words of our Lord, and compare them with what he saith elsewhere, we shall find them true to a tittle ; and that if there be any one instance, wherein this promise is not verified, and punctually fulfilled to us, the fault is in us, not in him that made it : as we shall clearly see, if we do but cast our eye upon all the words as they lie in order.

First, saith our Lord, *if ye, ye my disciples* : it is to them alone he speaks, both here, and wheresoever else he makes any such promise ; he never saith, if any one, but if ye that believe in me, ye that love and honour me, ye that obey and serve me, *if ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it* : he will do it for them, but for none else. The apostles commonly cast out devils by the name of Jesus, but the exorcists could not do so ; when they said, *We adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preacheth* ; the evil spirit answered, *Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye ?* Acts xix.

13. The devil himself could not tell what to make of such people, who did not believe in Jesus, and yet had the confidence to use his name. There are many such among us, who talk much of Jesus, and often use, or rather abuse, his sacred name, and yet they will not believe in him, nor take his yoke upon them, but still continue in their sins: and how can such expect that he should hear them? The man in the Gospel knew better than so, when he said, *We know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doth his will, him he heareth*, John ix. 31. And so said David, *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me*, Psal. lxxvi. 18. And that is the reason why so few are heard, because most are sinners, enemies to the cross of Christ, who can never pray sincerely in his name, nor indeed have any good design in what they pray for; and then it is no wonder they are not heard, as St. James observes, *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts*, Jam. iv. 3. And besides, none can pray aright in Christ's name, without the assistance of his Spirit: for, as the apostle saith, *We know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings that cannot be uttered*, Rom. viii. 26. It maketh intercession for us, not as Christ doth in heaven, but, as it is explained in the beginning of the verse, *by helping our infirmities*; i. e. by directing our intentions, by strengthening our faith, by exciting our desires, by supplying us, not, as some vainly imagine, with words, but with groanings which cannot be uttered, with such fervent and earnest affections, which no words are able to express, and none can know, but he that *searcheth the heart, and knows the mind of the Spirit*, ver 27

By this means, what we do, becomes acceptable to God, by him whose Spirit it is; but they who have *not the Spirit of Christ, are none of his*, Rom. viii. 9. They are none of his disciples, they do not believe in

him, nor pray in his name, nor obey him, nor do any thing as they ought, and therefore this promise doth not belong to them; for it is made only to Christ's faithful disciples, as he himself intimates in these very words; and in another place he expressly declares it, saying, *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you*, John xv. 7. And that this promise is always fulfilled to such, St. John found by his and all his fellow-disciples' experience: *Whatsoever we ask*, saith he, *we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight*, 1 John iii. 22.

But what doth our Lord here mean by asking, *If ye shall ask*? That he himself explains, where, speaking, upon supposition, of a man that went to borrow three loaves of his friend, he saith, *I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend; yet, because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you*, Luke xi. 8, 9. Where it is plain, that by asking, he means asking as the man did, with importunity; and these three, *ask*, *seek*, and *knock*, are not to be taken singly, every word by itself, as if they all signified the same thing; but they must be understood conjunctly, so as always to go together; ask so as to seek; seek so as to knock: that is, as St. Paul expresseth it, a man must continue *instant in prayer*, Rom. xii. 12. and *pray without ceasing*, 1 Thess. v. 17 Col. iv. 2. As when St. Peter was in prison, *prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him*, Acts xii. 5. They did not think it enough to pray once, but they prayed continually for him till he was out. Thus St. Paul, being troubled with a thorn in the flesh, *besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from him*, 2 Cor. xii. 7. Yea, our Lord himself prayed three times for the same thing, in

the same words, Matt. xxvi. 44. *And spake a parable to this very end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint*, Luke xviii. 1 And therefore it is in this sense that he is to be understood in my text: not that he will do what we ask once and no more; but if we pray, and faint not, but continue to ask it earnestly, instantly, importunately of him, then he will do it.

But what will he do? Any thing we ask, *if ye ask*, saith he, *any thing*: any thing that is good for us; that is necessarily supposed and implied in our asking it: for no man would ask any thing, but what he thinks to be good for him; what is evil, is not the object of our desires, but abhorrence: neither is it the subject matter of a promise, but a threatening; and therefore all God's promises to grant what we pray for, suppose it to be good for us: and therefore our Saviour saith, *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children; how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?* Matt. vii. 11. Instead of good things, St. Luke reads, *the Holy Spirit*, Luke xi. 13. that being the greatest good we can ask, or rather all good things together: for without that nothing is good; with it all things are so. They are good in the highest sense, that is, they are spiritually good; and they are such good things especially, that God hath promised, and which we therefore ought to ask: such things as are necessary to our doing good, and to our being good; and so to our obtaining eternal salvation by him. These are the good things which Christ purchased for us with his own blood; and therefore doth here promise to give us, upon our asking them in his name; as being really, absolutely, universally good in themselves; which the things of this life are not. They may, or may not be good for us; and whether they be, or be not, we cannot tell, only God knows that: and therefore we must ask such things of him, only with this proviso or condition, that he knows them to be good; or, as our church ex-

presseth it, *as may be most expedient for us*. But so far as any thing is so, we may confidently ask it, and believe that he will grant it to us. This is that which St. John means, where he saith, *This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us*, 1 John v. 14. For he hath plainly declared it to be his will, in that he hath promised to give us all things that are really good for us, so far as he himself knows them to be so. *For he will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that live a godly life*, Psalm lxxxiv. 12.

Wherefore, we not being able to see into the consequences of things, what may do us good or hurt at long run, must take special care not to be too particular in what we pray for ; but to ask only such things in general which God knows to be good for us, according to that divine form, which our Lord himself hath composed for our daily use. In which he hath taught us to begin our prayers in his name, by directing them to God as our Father in him ; for it is he that gives us power to become the sons of God, and so to call God Father, John i. 12. And then to pray, that his name may be hallowed, sanctified, or glorified in the world ; that his kingdom may come, the kingdom of his grace, into our hearts, and his glory over all the earth ; that his holy will may be done by us upon earth, as it is by the glorified saints and angels in heaven. These things are all good in themselves, the best that can be desired in the world : but as for other things, we pray not for great offices, large estates, long life, or the like ; but for our daily bread, for food convenient, so much as he knows to be necessary to support our mortal life, so long as he sees good. That he would forgive us our trespasses, whatsoever we have done contrary to his laws, as we for his sake forgive those who have wronged us : that he would not lead, nor suffer us to be led into any trial or temptation that may be too strong for us, and cause us to fall ; but that he would deliver us from evil, not from

this or that particular thing, which we think to be evil for us, but from evil in general, from whatsoever he knows to be so : and, by consequence, that he would give us whatsoever he knows to be good for us ; it being a great evil to want any thing that is good. Thus we ought always to pray in private, as we do in our public prayers, which are all composed according to this excellent form : and whatsoever we ask that is thus good for us, our Lord here promiseth to do it.

But for that purpose, we must ask it in his name : *If ye shall ask any thing*, saith he, *in my name*. Not only by using his name, as we are apt to do when we never think of him, but by apprehending and believing that we desire not the good things we ask, for any thing in ourselves, but that he hath merited them for us ; and therefore asking them only for his sake, as merited by him, trusting and depending upon him to mediate or intercede, that we may have them. For though it be not necessary to name his name in every petition, yet we must keep our hearts and our faith all along thus fixed upon him, as the only Mediator between God and man, by whom alone we can ever receive any thing that is good ; and by whom there is nothing that is good, but we may receive, and particularly that which we now ask, if it be really good for us, and we ask it thus in his name : for he himself hath promised to do it ; saying,

I will do it : he will do the very thing we ask, if that be best ; otherwise he will do something for us, which, all things considered, shall be better : so that our prayer is still answered. As if we ask something that is really good, in that it would conduce to some good end which we have in our eye, if he gives us something that will conduce more to that end than that particular thing we asked would, he doth not only do what we asked, but more. As when St. Paul prayed that the thorn in his flesh might be removed, and our Lord answered, *My grace is sufficient for thee*, 2 Cor. xii. 8. the apostle looked upon his prayer as fully answered, although he

had not the very thing he prayed for; because it was better to have the grace of Christ alway sufficient for him, than to be freed from any particular trouble. And thus it is that Christ usually doth what we ask; if he doth not do the thing itself, he doth that which is better, and which we therefore would have asked, if we had known it as well as he.

But how doth our Lord do what we thus ask in his name? Not in an extraordinary or miraculous manner, by altering the whole course of nature for it; but he doth it in the use of the ordinary means which he hath appointed for such an end: as if we ask for food convenient, he gives it by blessing us in our particular calling, or directing us to some such means, as by his assistance shall certainly effect it. If we pray for his Holy Spirit to assist and direct us in our lives, he gives it in the performance of our public and private devotions, in reading or hearing his holy word, and in receiving the holy sacrament; therefore called *the means of grace*, because it is by them that Christ usually confers his grace and Holy Spirit upon us. And thus whatsoever it is that we ask, we must use such means as he hath ordained for it; otherwise we have no ground to expect that he should do it, no more than that he should work miracles for us.

In this sense therefore these words are to be understood, and this promise is always fulfilled. If any of Christ's faithful servants and disciples, living in his true faith and fear, if they shall heartily, earnestly, and frequently ask any thing of Almighty God, that is really good for them; and if they ask it in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ, trusting on him and him alone for it, in the use of the proper means, then he will certainly do it: he will either do that very thing they ask, or something that is better for them; so that they shall never pray in vain: and they that do so, must conclude that they fail in some or other of the forementioned particulars. They are either no true Christians, or they

do not continue instant in prayer, or they ask something which they had better be without than have, or they do not ask it aright in the name of Christ, or else do not use the means that he hath appointed for it; for otherwise, it is impossible they should not have it, as impossible as it is for God to lie.

By this therefore we may see the great happiness of those who truly believe in Christ, and obey him; they can want nothing that is good, for they may have it for asking, if they do but ask it in his name: for he himself hath said to them, *If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.* And they who believe in him, cannot but believe that he will do as he hath said; but they who do not believe he will, to them be sure he will not perform his promise: for it doth not belong to them, being made only to those who will take his word, and accordingly believe that he will do what they pray for. *All things*, saith he, *whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive*, Matt. xxi. 22. And, *What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them*, Mark xi. 24. This is that which the apostles mean, by praying in *faith, nothing wavering*, Jam. i. 6. and *without doubting*, 1 Tim. ii. 8. And unless we thus pray in faith, believing in Christ's promise, we do not truly ask in his name, and then the promise doth not reach us. Wherefore, as ever we desire to experience the truth of this promise, we must do our Saviour so much justice as to believe it, and then we may be confident he will make it good: that he can do it, we all know, in that he is almighty; and that he will, we cannot doubt, in that he is truth itself, and hath said with his own divine mouth, *If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*

This is a thing much to be observed in all our prayers, public and private, at church and in our closets; whensoever we meet together in his name, our Lord hath told us, that he is in the midst of us, Matt. xviii. 20.

And, whatsoever we ask in his name, he hath said, that he will do it : and therefore, in all our addresses to the almighty Creator and Governor of the world, we must still have an eye to our blessed Saviour as interceding for us, and ask nothing but in his name ; and whatsoever it is that we ask in his name, we must believe that he according to his promise will do it, when he sees it to be good for us. And herein lies the great mystery and art of praying ; which can never be attained without much study and exercise : they who seldom use it, can never do it as they ought ; and then it is no wonder if they lose their labour : it is rather a wonder, how they can expect their prayers should be ever heard, when they do not think it worth their while to pray at all, unless it be when they have nothing else to do. And when they seem to pray, they do but seem to do it : they do not really pray according to God's command, and therefore have no ground to expect his promise should be performed to them. Whereas, they who exercise themselves continually in this great duty, learn by degrees to perform it, so as to be able to say upon their own experience, in the words of our church, *that what they ask faithfully, they obtain effectually, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

I heartily wish that all here present would make trial of it ; that ye would set yourselves in good earnest upon praying every day, both privately and publicly too, whensoever ye can get an opportunity ; and, that ye would strive every day more and more, to keep your hearts close to the duty, and your faith fixed upon your Saviour, to perfume it with the incense of his merits, to make it acceptable unto God, till at length ye be able to pray always in his name. Then ye will find by your own experience, that ye can no way employ yourselves better, nor so much to your profit and advantage : for ye can never be certain of getting any thing that is good any other way, but this way there is nothing that is

good but ye may be sure to have it, as sure as God's word can make it, for he himself hath said it; he that doth whatsoever he pleaseth, he that ordereth and disposeth of all the good things that are, he that cannot lie, he hath said, *If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*

SERMON XXXII.

CHRIST, AS MAN, IS THE HEAD OVER ALL THINGS.

EPH. i. 22, 23.

And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

ALTHOUGH the most high God be infinitely happy in himself, yet he made all things for himself, to shew forth his wisdom, power, goodness, and all such perfections as could any way be exerted in the making of them. But if all things had continued in the same estate wherein he made them, there could not possibly have been any fit and proper objects for some other of his divine perfections to work upon ; and therefore he was pleased to suffer some of his creatures to fall from their first estate ; as many of the angels did in their own persons, and all mankind in their first parents. Upon the angels that sinned, he immediately discovered his infinite justice, in condemning them to their deserved torments : but as for men, who fell, not as the other did, every one in his own person, but all in their common head, he was graciously pleased to find out a way, whereby to manifest his justice in the punishment of their sins, and yet to extend his mercy and truth unto their persons. This is the great mystery revealed in the Gospel ; where we find, that as God made all things by his Word, he also redeemed mankind by the same Word, incarnate ; *The Word was made flesh, and*

dwelt among us, John i. 14. The Word, the eternal Word, the only-begotten Son of God, of the same nature with the Father, he was made flesh ; he took upon him the whole nature of man, uniting it to his own divine Person, so as to become man too, of the same nature with us.

How this mysterious union could be affected, it would be great presumption in us to enquire, who understand not so much as how our own souls and bodies are linked together, how spirit and matter could be so united, as to make one person ; it is sufficient for us to know what is revealed concerning it, even, that as the creation of the world, so this wonderful union was made by the immediate power of God ; the Holy Ghost itself, who at first moved upon the face of the waters, now coming upon and overshadowing the blessed Virgin, so as to cause her to conceive that holy thing, Emmanuel, God and man in one person : who being thus conceived, he was afterwards born into the world, and in the nature of man, which he had so assumed, he grew up to the ordinary stature of other men, and then appeared publicly among them, discovering who he was, and what he came into the world about, by the miracles which he wrought, and the divine doctrine which he taught them ; until at last, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, he was taken, and by wicked hands was crucified and slain, as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind ; but he was afterwards raised again to life, and went up to heaven, where he hath been ever since, is now, and ever will be, the only Mediator between God and men.

This is that glorious and divine person which is called Jesus, our Saviour ; and he may well be called by that name, seeing it is only by him that God manifesteth his mercy and truth to mankind, and therefore he is the only Saviour that men ever had, or can have in the world : *for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*, Acts

iv. 12. But by him there is no man living but may be saved, if he will but apply himself to him for it : which that we may do, it highly concerns us all to understand how great a person he is, and how able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him ; for otherwise it is impossible to believe and trust on him, as we ought, for it. And therefore St. Paul determined to *know nothing among the Corinthians, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified*, 1 Cor. ii. 2. And St. Peter adviseth all to *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, 2 Pet. iii. 18. implying, that this is the only way whereby to understand how to believe in him, and to address ourselves to him, for all things necessary to our being saved by him.

Now although there be nothing revealed in the holy Scriptures concerning our blessed Saviour, but what was therefore revealed, that we may know it ; yet there are some things, doubtless, more necessary to be known than others : especially such as more immediately respect the offices which he undertook, in order to the accomplishing of our salvation ; as that he is the greatest Prophet of the world, that hath made known the will of God to mankind ; that he is an High-priest, to offer up sacrifice, and with that to make atonement and reconciliation for the sins of the world : and that he is a King, an almighty King, that rules and reigns over the whole world : which last, although it be one of the fundamental articles of his religion, yet it is seldom thought of, or at least not so duly considered as it ought : and therefore I shall endeavour so to explain it to you, at this time, that you may be able to form such an idea or notion of it in your minds, which by the blessing of God may incline your hearts to love and honour him, to obey and serve him, to believe and trust on him, and him only, for all things required, in order to your obtaining eternal salvation by him. This I shall endeavour, by his assistance, to do from the words which I have now read ; where the apostle, speaking of what God did for Christ,

after he had raised him from the dead, saith, *And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.* In which words there are three things much to be observed :

First, That Christ is now the head over all things.

Secondly, That he is so to the church.

Thirdly, That the church is in a peculiar manner his body.

Under which three heads all things are contained, which are necessary to be known concerning Christ's regal power.

As to the first, we must first observe, that the glory and power which is here attributed to our blessed Saviour, is declared to be given him by God, after he was raised from the dead ; and therefore it cannot be understood of his Godhead : for as God, he never died nor rose again ; as God, he was never set, but always was at the right-hand of the Father ; as God, he was not only far, as it is here said, but infinitely *above all principalities and powers* ; as God, he could not have any thing put under his feet, for all things were always there ; much less could he be given to be the head over all things, for, as God, he was so in himself, in his own nature : and therefore all this must of necessity be understood of his manhood, as distinct, though not divided from his Godhead, (for so it never was since it was first united ;) so that as where the apostle, speaking of Christ's sacerdotal power in heaven, saith, *There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*, 1 Tim. ii. 5. so speaking here of the regal power which he there exerciseth, he useth such terms, as plainly shew that he meaneth the man Christ Jesus, the man that died, the man that rose again, the man that ascended up to heaven ; the same man hath this power conferred upon him there, as he is man, or the son of man, as he often calls himself upon this and the like occasions.

This being premised, we may next observe, that the apostle here saith, *that God raised Christ from the*

dead, and set him at his own right-hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, ver. 20, 21. that is, above all the orders and degrees of angels, both good and bad, and likewise of men: he is set above them all, yea far above them; the highest angel in heaven being more inferior to him, than the poorest beggar is to the highest prince upon earth. Neither is he only thus far above them, but above all things else, above every name that is named, above every thing that hath a name, above every thing that is, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; not only in the world where we now are, but also in the other, where the angels are; nor in this only, which is at present, but in that which shall be hereafter. He is far above all things that ever were, or are, or shall be made in the whole world; and that too, not only in degree and honour, but likewise in authority and power: for it follows in the next words, the words of my text, *And he hath put all things under his feet*; not only into his hand, to handle and order them as he pleaseth, but under his feet, to trample upon them, and keep them in perpetual subjection. And he hath given or constituted him to be head over all things; the supreme Lord, Governor, Orderer, and Disposer of all things: so that he may do what he will with every thing that is, there being nothing in the world, but what is entire at his command, and under his dominion, as Lord-paramount of the whole creation.

This was foreshewn and typified long ago in Joseph, who having been sold and put into prison, he was no sooner delivered from thence, but he was made ruler over all the land of Egypt, *only in the throne*, said Pharaoh to him, *I will be greater than thou*, Gen. xli. 40, 41. though the regal authority was still in Pharaoh, yet the exercise of it was committed wholly unto Joseph, over all the affairs and persons in the whole kingdom. So here, Christ was no sooner raised from the grave, but, as he himself saith, *all power was given to him*,

both in heaven and earth, or the whole kingdom of God, Matt. xxviii. 18. It was committed to him by God the Father, in whom therefore it originally was, and so continued; but he committed the exercise of it to the Son, only in the throne the Father is greater than he: but he is ruler over all the kingdom, and manageth all the affairs of it under the Father, as he sees good; and therefore hath his throne too. For we read of the throne of God, and of the Lamb, Apoc. xxii. 1, 3. And he himself saith, *that the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of his glory*, Matt. xix. 28. which is elsewhere called also, *the throne of grace*, Heb. iv. 16. because all grace proceeds from thence. But this is still the same throne on which the Father sits: *I am set down*, saith he, *with my Father in his throne*, Apoc. iii. 21. though the Father therefore is greater in the throne than the Son, yet the throne itself, on which the Son sits, is no way inferior to the Father's, but one and the same with it. And so, though all power be committed to the Son by the Father; yet it is the same power that is in the Father, and is exercised by the Son, in his name, over all things that are in heaven and earth.

This is that which is meant by Christ's sitting or standing, or, which is the same, being at the right hand of God, Mark xvi. 19. Acts vii. 55, 56. Rom. viii. 34. Col. iii. 1. 1 Pet. iii. 22. which is elsewhere expressed by his *sitting on the right hand of the Majesty on high*, Heb. i. 3. by his being *set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens*, Heb. viii. 1. and by *the Son of man's sitting on the right hand of power*, Matt. xxvi. 64. For all these expressions amount to the same thing, *even that all power is committed unto him*; so that he reigns over all things that are. Thus St. Peter explains that phrase, where he saith, *that Christ is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him*, 1 Pet. iii. 22. And St. Paul, a little

before my text, *God set him at his own right hand, far above all principalities and powers, &c.* plainly explaining, that he is therefore said to be *on the right hand of God*, because he is far above all other things, other things are all subject unto him. And whereas David, speaking of Christ, saith, *The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool*, Psal. cx. 1 St. Paul interprets it of his reigning, *till he hath put all things under his feet*, 1 Cor. xv. 25. And St. Peter, having quoted the same words, draws this conclusion from them, *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ*, Acts ii. 36. This is his *sitting on the right hand of God*, even his being made the Lord, *the Lord of all things, the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords*, 1 Tim. vi. 15. Apoc. xvii. 14. xix. 16. From all which we may conclude, that Christ our Saviour is the supreme Governor of the world, and doth what he will with all and every thing that is in it; as he himself also hath assured us with his own mouth, saying, *The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son*, John v. 22.

Wherefore, that the man Christ Jesus is exalted far above, and vested with absolute authority over, all creatures whatsoever, so as to be the universal Monarch of the world, none can doubt, who believe what God himself saith, it being so fully and clearly revealed and declared in his most holy word: neither can we wonder at it, if we do but consider what great reasons there are for it. I shall instance at present only in two, both drawn from the same divine oracles, upon which our belief of the truth itself is grounded: the first I shall take from the superexcellency of his person, the other from the extraordinary merits of his death and passion.

First, therefore, we must know, that Jesus Christ, as he is truly man, of the same nature with us, so he is

likewise truly God, of the same nature with the Father; both these natures being so united in him, that he is both God and man in one and the same person: inso-much that, as the apostle saith, *all the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth in him bodily*, Col. ii. 9. all the fulness, the whole Godhead, the whole divine essence, with all the perfections of it, it doth not only sojourn for a while, but it inhabits, it dwells continually in him, and that too, not typically, not figuratively, nor symbolically, not accidentally, nor virtually only; but really, substantially, personally, bodily, in his very body, as he was made in the likeness of men, and found in fashion of a man, with a body and soul as other men have; the whole Godhead resides perpetually in both, and therefore in his whole manhood, and is so united to it, as never to be separated from it. But he always remains both perfect God, and perfect man; and yet not two, but one Christ: one, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking the manhood into God; one altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person: for as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ.

From hence therefore we may see, what great reason there is, that the man Christ Jesus should be preferred above all other creatures; for he in himself far excels all other: there being no creature in the world so near to God as he is, none united to God but only he. How excellent soever any of the angels may be in themselves, they are still but creatures, subsisting in no other but their own finite nature, upheld by the power of God; and therefore not comparable to him, who subsisteth in the very form or substance of God, and is personally united to him, so as to be God as well as man. By virtue of which union, his soul must needs excel all spirits, and his body all other matter in the world, as much, yea, far more than the sun exceeds a mere clod of earth. Hence his body is said to be *a glorious body*, Phil. iii. 21. the most glorious, doubtless, that can be

made of matter: though it be still of the same terrestrial matter which it was at first made of, and such as ours consist of; yet it is so modified, refined, sublimated, and exalted, that there can be no comparison between that and all other bodies. It is true, ours at the last *shall be fashioned by him like unto his own glorious body*, as like as they can be made; but after all, they must needs come far short of his, in which all the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth. And his soul being united, not only to such a body, but to God himself, must needs exceed the purest spirits in heaven, as much as they do the grossest matter upon earth, or rather there can be no comparison at all between them. And so his whole man having such an intimate relation unto God, as to make the same person with him, although his manhood be really distinct from his Godhead, and may and ought to be so considered when we speak of his dying, his rising again, his sitting on the right hand of God, and the like; yet we must never look upon him as a mere man, but as God also, the same by whom all things were created, and therefore ought to be subject to him, and give him the honour which is due to him as God: and therefore he himself saith, *That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*, John v. 23. So that the same honour which is due to the Father, who is God only, and not man, is due to the Son too, who is man also as well as God; which, lest any of the angels should omit to pay him, when they saw him at first incarnate, they had a particular charge given them by God to do it: for when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, *And let all the angels of God worship him*, Heb. i. 6.

Besides the superexcellency of his person, or, together with it, the extraordinary merits and consequences of the death which the man Christ Jesus suffered, entitle him to all the honour and power that is or can be conferred upon him. This we learn from the apostle, where having said, that *Christ being in the form of*

God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God ; and yet having taken upon him the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross ; he presently adds, Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in the earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father, Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11. Because he humbled himself so low, as to become obedient unto death, therefore God so highly exalted him, as to give him a name above every name : so Rom. xiv. 9. the same is implied in all such places, where his sufferings are declared to be, as it were, the way whereby he entered into his glory, or his glory to follow upon his sufferings ; as where he himself saith, Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory ? Luke xxiv. 16. And his apostle, When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, Heb. i. 3. And this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God, chap. x. 12. And again, Who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God, chap. xii. 2. From whence it seems also, that he himself had an eye to this transcendent glory in all his sufferings. To the same purpose is that also, which we read in the Revelation of St. John, where Christ himself saith, To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am sat down with my Father in his throne, Apoc. iii. 21. To all which I shall only add, that the very angels in heaven, over whom he is so highly exalted, acknowledge him to be worthy of all the honour that is given him upon this account, because he was slain for the sins of the world ;

for we read of an innumerable company of them, crying out with a loud voice, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing*, Apoc. v. 12.

I have insisted the longer upon the proof of this, because some have conceited, that Christ merited nothing for himself, but only for us, and that he looked not at his own glory, but only at ours, in what he did and suffered for us : whereas, in truth, he looked at ours, in order to his own ; and at his own only, in order to the glory of God the Father, the ultimate end of all his, as it ought to be of all our, actions. For this it was that he was so highly exalted, *that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*, Phil. ii. 11.

But that we may rightly understand, how Christ merited so much for himself as well as for us, by what he suffered in our nature, and how justly he is therefore advanced in that nature above all the creatures in the world, we must call to mind, what I observed in the beginning of this discourse, even that God doth all things for himself, for the manifestation of his own glory. The glory of many of his perfections appeared in the creation of the world, and still do so in the government of it. But there are other of his perfections which are discovered, so as to shine forth in all their glory, only by the redemption of fallen man ; as, his mercy and truth : though he be infinitely merciful and true in himself, yet he never shewed himself to be so to the fallen angels, although they stood in as much need of it as men did. He never shewed them any mercy, nor made them any promises wherein to manifest his truth, as he doth to men, because they had no redeemer, none to satisfy his justice, by bearing the punishment which was due to their sins, and so to make way for the manifestation of his mercy and truth unto them. But Christ, by his death, hath done this so effectually for

men, that God's mercy and truth appear now as clearly in the world, as his wisdom and power did in the creation of it. And therefore St. John saith, *The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*, John i. 17. It was not given, as the law was, by Moses, but it came by him, as the only means of bringing it into the world, without whom we had never known what mercy and truth are : for grace here is the same with mercy ; that which in the original, the Old Testament, is called *חסד*, and is all along there joined with *אמת*, *truth*, and is sometimes translated *goodness*, sometimes *loving-kindness*, but most frequently *mercy*, or that divine perfection, whereby God is graciously pleased to pardon the sins of men, to receive them into his favour again, to be reconciled to them, to bless them, to sanctify them, to accept of them, and at last to save them, upon their repentance and belief in him, and in his Son. That is that grace or mercy which is promised in the Gospel ; where his truth also appears in the faithful performance of all such promises, to all such as believe or trust in them, and are persuaded that God will make them good, notwithstanding their manifold sins, whereby they have provoked his wrath and displeasure against them. But it is in Christ only that these promises of mercy are both made and fulfilled ; *for all the promises of God in him are Yea, and in him Amen, to the glory of God by us*, 2 Cor. i. 20. to the glory both of his mercy and truth, which nowhere shines forth so gloriously as in the making and performing such gracious and wonderful promises to mankind.

This God himself is graciously pleased to account his glory, in an especial manner ; for when Moses desired to see his glory, he, in answer to his prayer, promised to make his goodness pass before him ; *and accordingly the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness, or mercy and truth,*

&c. Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19. xxxiv 6. This is his glory, which we thank him for after the communion ; but this his glory appears only in Jesus Christ. All the creatures in the world could never have opened a way for the discovery of it : it was only Jesus Christ, God and man in one person, that could expiate the sins of mankind so, that God, without the violation of his justice, could shew forth his mercy and truth unto them ; and therefore, it is no wonder that God hath set him at his own right hand, above all creatures whatsoever, *and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church.*

To the church : that is the next thing to be here observed. As he is not here said to be the head of all things, but the head over all things ; so he is said to be so to the church, or that congregation of faithful people which he hath purchased with his own blood. It is for that, that he is vested with such absolute and supreme authority over all things, that he may be able to defend that, and bring all the sound members of it, even all that truly believe in him, to eternal life. This he himself also asserts, to be the end of all the power that is given him of the Father ; for in his prayer to the Father he saith, *Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son, that thy Son may also glorify thee : as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him,* John xvii. 1, 2. To the same purpose is that of St. Peter, where, speaking of Christ, he saith, *Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins,* Acts v. 31. Repentance and forgiveness are both necessary to eternal life. And Christ is therefore exalted, that he might give them to Israel his true church, which otherwise he might not be able to do : for, unless he was such an almighty Prince, as to order and dispose of all things in the world, for the good of his church, things might so fall out, that his church might be destroyed,

and many, if not all the members of it, might be so overpowered by their spiritual adversaries, that they might never repent, and so be never qualified for pardon and salvation.

But there is no fear of that ; for as he hath all power given him, so he is always exercising of it : *My Father*, saith he, *worketh hitherto, and I work*, John v. 17. The Father governeth and manageth all and every thing that is for the good of the whole creation in general ; and the Son doth the same continually, for the good of his church in particular ; *that all things may work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose*, Rom. viii. 28. And that is the reason they do so, because he orders them. He, as head over all things to the church, orders all things, so as to make them turn to the benefit and advantage of all who love God, and of them only : all others are left to the general providence of God, as he is the righteous Judge and Governor of the world ; and being under his displeasure, have no ground to expect that any thing should do them good, but rather that all things should conspire, as they do, to punish them for rebelling against their almighty Creator. And the same would be the fate of all mankind ; all things would work together for evil to all men, but that they are subject unto Christ ; and he alters their natural tendencies, and disposeth of them so as not to hurt, but do good to those who repent and turn to God. They are his own people, members of his own body ; and therefore he takes special care that all things may serve them, and conduce one way or other to their happiness or salvation. The most glorious creatures that are, the holy angels themselves, are not exempted from it : for he being exalted far above them, employs them also to minister help and comfort, and all things that they are capable of doing for them : for, *are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation ?* Heb. i. 14. And

though they have many enemies in the world, he suffers none of them to do his people any harm : they may spit their venom against them, but he changes the nature of it, and turns it into wholesome food, or physic for them ; insomuch that the very gates of hell can never prevail against his church, nor against any one sound member of it : *The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death*, 1 Cor. xv. 26. but that shall be destroyed at last, so as never to be any more : *for as the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, the righteous shall go into life eternal*, Matt. xxv. 46. *And when all things shall be thus subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all*, 1 Cor. xv. 28. Not that he will then cease to be a king ; for *of his kingdom there shall be no end*, Luke i. 33. But he shall no longer exercise his regal power, in subduing of his enemies, because he will have none to subdue, and then the man *Christ Jesus shall deliver up the kingdom of God, even the Father*, ver. 24. and be subject to him ; but so, that as God he will reign for ever with him : and so the whole work of man's redemption will at last centre in God, that he may appear to be as he is, *all in all*.

But while his church is here militant upon earth, he exerciseth his regal power, not only in subduing its enemies, but likewise in appointing and commissioning officers, to administer his word and sacraments, and the discipline that he hath settled in it, for the increasing, strengthening, and well-governing of the whole, and also of every part of it : for, *when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men : and he gave some, apostles ; and some, prophets ; and some, evangelists ; and some, pastors and teachers ; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ*, Eph. iv. 8, 11, 12. This he did most sensibly, when he first ascended up to heaven, by sending down his

Holy Spirit in a visible manner upon his apostles, that all the world might know, that the gifts and graces of the Spirit all come from the Lord Christ, as he is exalted at the right hand of God. It was by him that the patriarchs and prophets were inspired in the Old Testament, as well as the apostles and evangelists in the New ; and it is he who still appoints and empowereth officers in his church, for the edifying and well-governing of his people ; they are his ministers, his ambassadors, acting only in his name : and it is he alone who makes their ministry effectual, to the ends for which he hath ordained it : for which purpose he also is always present with them, in the execution of their respective offices under him : *And, lo, saith he, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world,* Matt. xxviii. 20. And so he was in his church, from the beginning of it ; and for many ages together he manifested himself to be so, by sitting between the cherubims, upon the mercy-seat, over the ark, where the tables of the law were laid, and there issuing forth his oracles and responses to his people, that consulted him upon all occasions, to know his pleasure : and for a long time they had no other king but him ; and when they had a mind to have another, he at first rebuked them for it, as rejecting him from ruling over them, 1 Sam. viii. 6, 7 x. 19. but afterwards he was pleased to consent to it ; but so, that he chose the persons, and gave them power to act under him, as his viceroys or deputies ; he was still their Sovereign ; the King of Israel, as he is often called : insomuch, that the form of government, under which his church and people then lived, was most properly, as Josephus terms it, Θεοκρατία, a divine government. And this was a clear representation also of that regal power which he exerciseth in heaven ; where, being exalted *as head over all things*, and sitting upon the throne of grace, in the midst of cherubims and seraphims, he takes particular care of his church, as his own proper kingdom and people,

which he loved, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish, Eph. v. 25, 26, 27 And for the same purpose, he defends it all along by his almighty power; he directs and governs it by his Holy Spirit; he disposes of all things both in it, and out of it, for the benefit and advantage of it; and so will continue to do, till that which is militant here on earth, be made a most glorious church triumphant in heaven; and all because, as the apostle here adds, *the church is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.*

Which is the last thing to be here observed concerning Christ's regal power, that *he is head over all things for the church, as it is his body.* His body, not only in a political sense, as a kingdom is usually called a body politic, for the Greek word *σῶμα*, is never, as I remember, taken in that sense: be sure the apostle here, and all along, useth it according to its common signification for a natural body, though in a mystical sense; as where he saith, *Christ is the head of the body, the church*, Col. i. 18. And writing to the church at Corinth; *For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? &c. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular*, 1 Cor. xii. 12, 14, 15, 27 Where he plainly compares the whole church to the body of a man, of which every believer is a member in particular, according to his place and station in that body: one is an eye, another a hand, a third a foot; one is a higher, another a lower member; but still every one is a member, and Christ the head of the whole body: he rules and governs it, he influenceth and

directeth it, he gives life, and vigour, and motion to it, and to every member of it, as the head doth to the body of a man, by the vital and animal spirits, which are transmitted from thence into every part of the body, through many little bands, or ligaments, and channels, whereby the head and body are joined together, and communicate with one another; so doth Christ to the church: from him the head, as the apostle saith, *the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love*, Eph. iv. 16. And again, from him as the head, *All the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God*, Col. ii. 19. which shews the strictest union that can possibly be, between Christ and his church; and likewise his wonderful way of working upon it, by his Holy Spirit, which proceeding from him, the head, is diffused into the whole body, and into every part and member of it. By this the whole is preserved, strengthened, increased; and by this every particular member is nourished, quickened, excited, and enabled to perform all the functions of the new and spiritual life, which he hath put into it: by this his Holy Spirit, as it is administered in the sacrament of baptism, we are inserted into his body, and made members of it; *for by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body*, 1 Cor. xii. 13. *and so are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones*, Eph. v. 30. And by the same Spirit administered in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, we are strengthened and refreshed; *for hereby we, being many, are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread*, the staff and support of our spiritual life, 1 Cor. x. 17. And therefore it is no wonder that Christ takes so great care of his church, seeing it is so nearly related, so intimately united to him, that it is his body, yea, so his body, that it is his πληρωμα, his fulness,

that whereby he is full and complete, which otherwise he would not be, no more than a head is without a body, although in himself *he filleth all in all*. In himself, absolutely considered, dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily; but considered as head of the church, without that he would not be perfect, for he would want a body, and so could not be properly a head. And therefore the apostle here truly calls the church his fulness, or complement: but lest this should seem to derogate from the fulness that he hath in himself, he calls it *the fulness of him that filleth all in all*; which as it is the highest encomium that can be given of the church, so it is the ground also of all the great things that Christ hath done, and is still doing in heaven for it; where he is *head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all*.

These things may seem perhaps to some to be matters only of theory and speculation; but if duly considered, they will be found to have as great influence upon our minds and actions, as any articles of our faith whatsoever. For is Christ our Saviour exalted at the right hand of God? Are all things put under his feet? What a glorious, what a mighty Saviour then have we now in heaven? How well may we believe, and trust on him for all things necessary for our salvation? For, *who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us*, Rom. viii. 34. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? All these things are conquered by Christ our Saviour: nay, in all these things, we ourselves too are more than conquerors through him that loved us*, ver. 35, 37. What then can impede or hinder our salvation by him? Can men, or angels, or devils themselves? They are all under our Saviour's feet, and cannot so much as stir

without him ; and therefore we may defy them all, and say with the apostle, *I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*, ver. 38, 39.

Is Christ given to be head over all things to the church? How then can the gates of hell ever prevail against it, or against any sound member of it? What can we want, what need we fear, who have him that hath all things under him always ready to supply and help us? What can he not do for us that he will? And what will he not do for us that he can? He that is head over all things, he can do all things for us, he can subdue all things under us, he can give all things to us, he can prevent all things from doing us any harm, and he can make all things work together for good. And he that is head over all things to the church, we may be sure, will do all he can for us ; that being the end of his being exalted over all things, that he may dispose of all things, so as will best conduce to our happiness and salvation by him. And we may well be confident, that he will fully answer the end of his exaltation in heaven, where he always sits upon the throne of grace, ready to receive the petitions we put up to God in his name, and to see they be granted according to the promise which he made us, when he was upon earth, saying, *Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you*, John xvi. 23.

Is the church the body of Christ, *the fulness of him that filleth all in all*? What love and care then must Christ needs have for his church, nourishing and cherishing it even as his own flesh? And what love should all the members of the church have for him, as well as for one another? What care to serve, honour, and obey him? How soberly, how righteously, how godly should

they live, who are so nearly related to him, that is *head over all things in the world*? And who would not be in the number of them?

God grant that all here present may be so; that we may all be real members of that body, of which Christ is head, and live accordingly, that we may be influenced, directed, strengthened, governed, and protected continually by his power and Spirit; that we may always do those things that please him, and so always live under his particular care and conduct; who hath all things put under his feet, and is given to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all; and liveth and reigneth, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

SERMON XXXIII.

CHRIST IS OUR LORD AND MASTER.

JOHN xiii. 13.

*Ye call me Master and Lord : and ye say well ; for so
I am.*

THAT Jesus Christ is our Lord and Master, we all acknowledge ; we acknowledge it in our daily prayers ; we acknowledge it in the hymns and praises that we offer up to God ; we acknowledge it every time we repeat the Apostles' Creed ; we acknowledge it in our common discourse : we seldom speak of Christ to one another, but we call him our Lord. And so we all acknowledge him to be so with our mouths, but I fear there are but few who do it in their hearts ; but few who duly consider what they say, when they call Christ their Lord ; but speak it only as a word of course, which they have accustomed themselves to, and therefore they repeat it over and over again, without ever considering the true meaning and purport of it : for if they did that, whensoever men speak of Christ as their Lord and Master, they really thought and believed him to be so, they could not but take more care than they commonly do to please and honour him, and to carry themselves as his servants through the whole course of their life. But the plain truth is, we serve this as we do the other articles of our faith, we own it in general to be true, but

never make any particular application of it to ourselves, and so are no way affected with it : but notwithstanding our profession to believe it, we live as if it were not so. Whereas, if we lived with a constant belief and sense of this upon our minds, that Christ is our Master and Lord, we should always look upon ourselves as bound in duty and conscience to do the works that he hath set us, and to act according to the rules and laws which he hath prescribed to us. And hence it is, that he himself here puts his disciples (and us among the rest) in mind of this great truth, assuring them of it with his own mouth, saying, *Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye say well, for so I am.* Whereby he gave them to understand, that when they called him Lord or Master, as they usually did when they spoke to him, or to others of him, he would not have them do it only out of compliment and flattery, nor think by that title they gave him more respect than what was due to him ; but he would have them know and remember, that they said well and truly, whensoever they called him so ; for that he really was and is their Lord and Master. Neither did he say this only for their sakes to whom he spake it ; but for ours also, for whose sake it is recorded, that we may take notice of the relation we stand in to him, and behave ourselves accordingly.

Which therefore that we may for the future do, waving the occasion of the words till afterwards, when it will come in course to be considered ; we shall observe,

First, In what sense Jesus Christ is our *Lord and Master* : and then,

Secondly, What obligations this relation to him lays upon us, and what use and improvement is to be made of it.

As for the first, nothing is more plain and certain from the holy Scriptures, than that Jesus Christ is Lord, in the highest and most proper sense of the word. He is sometimes called, *the Lord Jesus* : *They found not the body of the Lord Jesus*, saith St. Luke, xxiv 3.

All the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, saith St. Peter, Acts i. 21 And St. Stephen, *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit*, Acts vii. 59. Sometimes he is called, *the Lord Christ*; as where St. Paul saith, *Ye serve the Lord Christ*, Col. iii. 24. Sometimes, *the Lord Jesus Christ*; as, *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*, Acts xvi. 31 Sometimes, *Christ Jesus the Lord*: *As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord*, Col. ii. 6. Sometimes, yea very often, he is called absolutely, *the Lord*, without the addition of any other name or title: as where it is written, *And when the Lord saw her*, Luke vii. 13. and, *they have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre*, John xx. 2. and Mary Magdalen told the disciples, *that she had seen the Lord*, John xx. 18. Yea, the very angels give him this title, *Come*, saith the angel, *see the place where the Lord lay*, Matt. xxviii. 6. Neither do men and angels only, but the infallible Spirit of God himself calls Christ, *the Lord*, all along in his holy oracles; especially in the New Testament, wheresoever there is mention made of the Lord in general, it is always meant of the Lord Christ, even in such places also which are quoted out of the Old Testament as well as the other, as might easily be shewn. And in the Old Testament itself, this great name is very often given to God the Son, as well as to the Father, and can be understood of no other than the Lord Jesus; as where he is called, *The Lord our righteousness*, Jer. xxiii. 6. where God saith, *that he will save his people by the Lord their God*, Hos. i. 7 where Daniel beseecheth God *to hear his prayer, for the Lord's sake*, ch. ix. 17 Yea, wheresoever it is said in the prophets, *Thus saith the Lord*, it is always to be understood of the Lord Christ; for it was his Spirit that was in the prophets, as St. Peter assures us from him, 1 Pet. i. 11

But here we must observe, that the Hebrew word, which the Greek interpreters generally translate *Κύριον*, we, *The LORD*, in great letters; the word, I say, in

the original is יהוה, the incommunicable name of the divine essence, proper and peculiar only to the true God, and to Jesus Christ only as such, as he is the eternal Son of God, of the same individual essence with the Father: for as such, all things were made by him, all things depend upon him, all things have their being, or subsist continually in him; and therefore, all things must needs be entirely under his dominion and lordship: and he doth whatsoever he pleaseth in heaven and earth, making all things in their several places, and according to their several abilities, to serve him, the supreme Lord, the universal Governor of the whole world.

But besides this his original and essential title to absolute dominion over all things, as he is God, he hath another also as he is *Emmanuel, God-man*, and therefore Jesus, or the Saviour of mankind; for, as such, he is *appointed heir of all things*, Heb. i. 2. He is *Lord of lords, and King of kings*, 1 Tim. vi. 15. Rev. xix. 16. Psal. cxxxvi. 3. He is *the Lord of the whole earth*, Josh. iii. 11, 13. Psal. xcvi. 5. Zech. iv. 14. vi. 5. Mic. iv. 13. He hath *the heathen given him for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession*, Psal. ii. 8. He hath *dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth*, Psal. lxxii. 8. He hath *given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed*, Dan. vii. 14. He *reigns over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end*, Luke i. 33. He is *Lord of all*, Acts x. 36. and *over all*, Rom. x. 12. He hath *all power given him in heaven and in earth*, Matt. xxviii. 18. He hath *authority given him to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man*, John v. 27. *For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son*, ver. 22. And *hath given all things into his hand*, John xiii. 3. He

hath set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Eph. i. 20, 21, 22. 1 Cor. xv. 27 In short, *seeing he, being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God; and yet took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross: therefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father, Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living, Rom. xiv. 9.*

I thought good to lay all these places of holy Scripture together, that we may at one view behold what we ought to believe concerning our blessed Saviour's authority and dominion; what a mighty Lord he is, how far his dominion reacheth, and how long it lasts. For here we see, that he is the Lord of the whole earth, and of all the kingdoms and nations that are on it: that all the kings and princes there, how absolute soever they may be in respect of one another, or of their own respective subjects, are all subject to the Lord Jesus, and hold their kingdoms and principalities under him: that he executeth judgment upon the sons of men, and doth what he pleaseth with every one of them: that his jurisdiction is not confined to the earth, but extends itself as far as heaven, and to the utmost bounds of the whole creation: that he is exalted above, far above angels, archangels, and all the powers of the other world, as well as this: that all this supreme authority is committed by God the Father to him, as he is the Son of

man, and because he is so: that all things are thus made subject to him, because, as he was the Son of man, he became obedient even to the death of the cross, and by that means merited, or deserved it at the hands of God: that the great end, wherefore he is thus given to be the head or supreme Governor over all things, was for the sake of the church, that he might order and dispose of all things that happen by God's general providence, so as to make them work together for the good of his church, and of every particular member of it: that all the creatures in heaven and earth are therefore bound to acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the Lord, and that this is highly for the glory of God the Father: and, that this his dominion and power shall be continually exercised to the end of the world, when his enemies being all destroyed, and his saints made perfect in glory, so that there will be no more occasion for the exercise of any such authority, *he shall then deliver up the kingdom to God and the Father*, 1 Cor. xv. 24. As he is the Son of man, he will deliver it up to God; as he is the Son of God, he will deliver it up unto the Father; yet so, that he himself also shall reign as King and Lord for ever.

By this we may see, how great a Lord Jesus Christ is; so great, that the greatest lords and princes upon earth are infinitely more inferior and subject unto him, than their meanest subjects and servants are to them: inso-much that, in comparison of him, all must acknowledge, as we do in the eucharistical hymn, *that he only is the Lord*; and all the creatures in heaven and earth are bound to own him for their Lord and Master. But mankind in general, and particularly we, and all the members of his church, have another and more special obligation upon us to do it; forasmuch as when we were sold under sin, and therefore subject to the wrath of God, the Lord Jesus was pleased to purchase and redeem us to himself, on purpose that he might be our Lord and Master, and we his subjects and servants, in

the strictest sense that could be ; for it is written, *that he purchased his church with his own blood*, Acts xx. 28. We are redeemed from our vain conversation with the precious blood of Christ, as of a *Lamb without blemish and without spot*, 1 Pet. i. 18. for he *gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*, Tit. ii. 14. and so *deliver us from the wrath to come*, 1 Thess. i. 10. Wherefore we being thus bought with a price, *we are none of our own*, 1 Cor. vi. 19. but we are wholly his who bought us, his lot, his flock, his purchase, his inheritance, his saints, his servants, his elect, his *עֲבָדָיו*, his treasure, his special or peculiar people, as the children of Israel are called, Exod. xix. 5. And so are all the true Israel of God, *they are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people* (1 Pet. ii. 9.) unto him, and he is in a peculiar manner their Lord and Master : he exerciseth a peculiar government over them, and takes special care of them above all people : he having redeemed them to himself, as their great Lord and Patron, he nourisheth and maintaineth them at his own cost and charges : he supplies them with all things necessary both for life and godliness : he feeds them often at his own table : he appoints them all their several places and stations in the world, where they may do him best service : he gives them every one work to do, and calls them to account how they do it : he defends them from all their enemies, and suffers none to do them hurt : he blesseth and sanctifieth all occurrences to them, so as to make all things work together for their good : if they happen to go astray, he, one way or other, brings them back again, to mind the business that he hath set them : if they offend, as they often do, his and their heavenly Father, he makes atonement and reconciliation for them : if their hearts be broken, or their consciences wounded for their sins, he binds them up, and heals them again, so as to make them sounder

than they were before : if they be infirm and weak, not able to do the work he employs them in, he refresheth, he animates, he strengthens them with his grace and Holy Spirit in the inner man ; so that they can do all things through Christ that strengthens them. In short, he gives them whatsoever they have, he supplies them with whatsoever they want, he directs and assists them in whatsoever they do : and when their day is spent, and their work done, he gives them great recompence of reward, saying to every one of them, *Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*, Matt. xxv. 21.

The joy of thy Lord : a phrase much to be observed ; for hereby he puts us in mind, that he is not only a Lord in general, but that he is our Lord, and the Lord of every one of us in particular, and that we ought to look upon him as such : and so his people have always done. In the Old Testament, they did not only call him יהוה, *the Lord*, but also ארני, *our Lord* ; as David, said, *O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth*, Psal. viii. 1. And ארני, *my Lord* ; as David again, *The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand*, Psal. cx. 1. And Daniel, *And now, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, למען ארני, for my Lord's sake*, as the words may be rendered, Dan. ix. 17. And so in the New Testament, when the apostles, disciples, or such as believed in him, spake of him, with relation to the church in general, they usually call him, as we do in our public prayers, *Jesus Christ our Lord*, as being the Lord of the whole church, and of all the members of it alike : but when they speak of him, every one with relation to himself, every one appropriates him, as it were, to himself, and calls him *his Lord* in particular. *Whence is this to me*, saith Elizabeth, *that the mother of my Lord is come to me* ? Luke i. 43. *They have taken away my Lord*, saith Mary Magdalen, John xx. 13. *Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God,*

ver. 28. And St. Paul, *I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord*, Phil. iii. 8. And so we all may, or rather, so we ought all to do. It is not enough for me to acknowledge Christ to be the Lord of all believers in general, but I must look upon him as my Lord, and my Master, in a particular manner ; and so ought every one of us to do : *He tasted death for every one of us*, Heb. ii. 9. And every one of us is baptized into his death, and we then covenanted with him, and promised every one of us to be his servant, and to own him for our Lord and Master ; which therefore we are every one bound to do all our life long. I say, all our life long : for it is not enough for us to acknowledge it in general, or to think of it only now and then ; but we ought to live with a firm belief, and with a constant sense of this upon our minds, that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Patron, our Master and Governor ; and that we are always at his service, under his command, entirely subject to his will and pleasure : he may do with us what he will, and we cannot gainsay it ; he may command us what he pleases, and we are bound to do it. Neither must we look upon him as our Lord only at a distance, but as one that is always present with us, wheresoever we are, and take notice of every thing we do, intending to reward or punish us, according as we do or do not what he commands, and so as he commands it to be done : especially when we are at church, we are then to look upon ourselves as in the house of our Lord, where he himself assures us he is specially present, saying, *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*, Matt. xviii. 20. But above all, while we are at his holy table, where every thing hath the nearest relation to him that can be upon earth : the table itself is the table of the Lord, 1 Cor. x. 21. the bread which we there eat is the body of the Lord, chap. xi. 29. the cup we there drink is the cup of the Lord, chap. x. 21. the whole feast is called, *The supper of the Lord*, chap. xi. 20. *of our Lord and Master*

Christ. And therefore all the while that we are there, we should carry ourselves with that reverence and godly fear, which becometh servants in the presence of their Lord, their mighty, their almighty Lord, the Lord of the whole world.

Could we keep this great truth thus always fixed upon our minds, it would be of mighty use and advantage to us, through the whole course of our lives : as I promised to shew in the next place, and may easily do it.

For which purpose we may first take notice, that one great reason, wherefore so many of those who profess the Gospel of Christ take no care to live according to the rules prescribed in it, is, because they look upon Christ only as their Saviour, not as their Lord and Master. They have been taught, and accordingly believe as they ought, that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world, that he died for them, and was thereby *a propitiation for their sins ; and not theirs only, but for the sins of the whole world*, 1 John ii. 1, 2. And therefore they hope that he will save them from the wrath of God, and from all the punishments which are due unto them for their sins. And this is all that men generally expect from Christ their Saviour : and it is true, they have all the reason that can be to expect it from him, if they do but observe what he hath appointed in order thereunto. But this they seldom do, upon this account, because looking upon Christ only under the notion of their Saviour, Mediator, and Advocate, to make atonement for their sins, they are apt to be secure, and take no further care of doing what he hath appointed and commanded, in order to their obtaining pardon and salvation by him. Whereas, if they would look upon Christ as their Lord as well as their Saviour, their Master as well as their Redeemer, and therefore their Lord and Master, because their Saviour and Redeemer, as I have shewn he is ; they would then see themselves as much obliged to obey his laws, as they are concerned to believe his promises ; and be as fear-

ful to offend him, as they are desirous to be saved by him. There is no temptation they can be under, there is no duty they can set about, there is no place, no employment, no condition or circumstance of life they can be in, but this, if duly considered, would be a check upon them, and help to keep them within their line : but I shall instance only in such uses, which the holy Scripture directs us to make of this great truth, that the Lord Jesus is our Lord and Master

I shall begin with that use which our Lord himself makes of it in this place. He, after his last supper, condescended so far as to wash his disciples' feet : but when he came to Simon, Simon said to him, *Lord, dost thou wash my feet ?* ver. 6. Our Lord, among other things, answered, *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me :* upon which, Simon Peter said, *Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head,* ver. 9. Where we may observe, that when St. Peter spoke to him, he still called him Lord : from whence our Lord seems to take the occasion of uttering these words ; *Ye call me Master and Lord ; and ye say well ; for so I am :* and then he adds, *If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet ; for I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord, neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him,* ver 14, 15, 16. His washing of his disciples' feet was a great instance of his kindness to them, and likewise of his humility and condescension. This therefore is the use that he himself did, and would have us to make of this doctrine ; that seeing he is our great Lord and Master, and yet he stooped so low, as to do such a mean office for his disciples, we, who are his disciples and his servants, should think nothing too mean, nothing too low, that we can possibly do for one another. And this is that virtue, wherein he would have us, in an especial manner, to follow his example ; *Learn of me*, saith he,

for I am meek and lowly in heart, Matt. xi. 21. And it is very observable, that he would have us learn meekness and patience, as well as humility of him, upon this account, because he is our Lord : *The disciple*, saith he, *is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord : it is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household ?* Matt. x. 24, 25. This is a thing he would have them take special notice of, so as to keep it always in their minds : *Remember*, saith he, *the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than the lord : if they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you ; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also*, John xv. 20. And verily, if our Lord Jesus was reproached, afflicted, persecuted, as he was while he lived on earth, it was no wonder if we be so too : for how can we, his servants, expect to fare better in the world, than he our great Lord and Master did ? And if he for our sake underwent all that was laid upon him, with so much patience and meekness, that *when he was reviled, he reviled not again ; when he suffered, he threatened not ; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously*, 1 Pet. ii. 23. what cause have we patiently to submit to whatsoever God, for his sake, shall see good to lay upon us, without being discomposed in ourselves, or disturbed and vexed at the instruments of it ? How well might the apostle say, *The servant of the Lord*, the Lord Jesus, *must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient ?* 2 Tim. ii. 24. For otherwise he would be far from carrying himself as the servant of such a Lord, and far from doing him any service ; for they *that cause divisions, serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies*, Rom. xvi. 18. Hence also, they who have servants under them, remembering that they have so great a Master above them, should learn to be as just and equitable unto their servants, as they desire their Master

should be kind and merciful unto them. This is the use which the apostle makes of this doctrine, saying, *Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven,* Col. iv. 1

But that which I would chiefly put you in mind of at present is the duty which you owe to Christ, as he is your Lord: for as such you are certainly bound to carry yourselves towards him, as becomes his servants in all respects. For, first, is Christ your Lord? Then you must prefer and love him above all things and persons upon earth; forasmuch as there is no thing, nor person upon earth, that hath so much authority over you as he hath, nor that expresseth so much love and kindness to you as he doth. It was he that loved you, so as to give himself for you, on purpose to redeem you to himself: it was he that delivered you from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God: it was he that purchased all manner of blessings for you, with the price of his own blood; and it is he who conferreth them upon you, and continues them to you: so that whatsoever good thing you have, whatsoever blessing or mercy you receive from the hands of God, you are beholden unto Christ for it, and hold it only during the will and pleasure of him your Lord and Master. For, as God would never have been merciful to you at all unless Christ had died, so he would not continue any mercy to you, unless Christ your Lord continued to make intercession for you. What infinite cause then have you to love and value him above all things, without whom you could have nothing to love or value? Hence it is that our Lord himself saith, *He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me,* Matt. x. 37 Whereby he gives us to understand, that he who loves any thing as much, or more than him, is not worthy to be his servant, or to call him Lord: and therefore we may truly say with the apostle,

If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maran-atha, 1 Cor. xvi. 22. But grace shall be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, Eph. vi. 24.

Again, is Christ your Lord? What honour and respect then ought you to shew him upon all occasions? Far more than you do to any creature; yea the same that you give to the Creator himself: *for the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son,* (and so hath made him Lord of all things,) *that all should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father, John v. 22, 23.* All, not only men, but angels; *for God hath given him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in the earth, and things under the earth, Phil. ii. 10.* And when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, *And let all the angels of God worship him, Heb. i. 6.* And if the angels themselves worship him, how much more ought men to do it? especially they, who own him to be their Lord, and profess themselves to be his humble servants, as all here present do? Certainly, whensoever you meet with him, you ought to shew him all the respect which is due to so great a Lord, all the while that you are in his presence, as you always are in a special manner, when ye meet together in his name; for he himself hath said, *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them, Matt. xviii. 20.* Wherefore, we being here met together in his name, we may be confident, that he is in the midst of us, more confident than if we saw him with our eyes: forasmuch as we have his word for it, who cannot lie, nor err, as our senses often do. But is our Lord here present? Is he in the midst of us? How gravely then, how modestly, how humbly, how reverently should we carry ourselves before him? Let us but remember, that our Lord is with us, wheresoever we meet together in his name, and we shall need no other argument to per-

suade us to worship him with reverence and godly fear.

Moreover, is Christ your Lord? Then ye ought to obey him, and do whatsoever he commands you. This is no more than what ye expect from your servants, even to do what you bid them; and they are bound by their covenants to do it. How much more are you bound to observe what your Lord and Master, the Sovereign of all the world, requires of you? Besides all other considerations, this very relation you stand in to him obligeth you to it; so that it is in vain, it is absurd to pretend that he is your Lord, and yet not to obey him: as he himself argues, saying, *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?* Luke vi. 46. implying, that they who will not observe his laws, ought not to call him Lord; for though they profess he is so with their mouths, in works they deny it, and in effect say, *We will not have this man rule over us.*

But I hope better things of you; and that, as ye own Christ to be your Lord, ye are ready to shew it, by doing whatsoever he hath commanded, so soon as it is made known to you. Wherefore, that you may not pretend ignorance, I shall, in his name and presence, put you in mind of what he would have you all do; and that it may come with the more force upon you, I shall instance only in such things as he himself was pleased to utter with his own mouth, when he was upon earth. Be it known therefore to you, that Jesus Christ your Lord and Master commands you all *to repent and believe the Gospel*, Mark i. 15. *to believe in God, and to believe also in him*, John xiv. 1. *to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind*, Matt. xvii. 37 *not to fear them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather to fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*, Matt. x. 28. *always to pray to God*, Luke xviii. 1 *and when ye pray, to say, Our Father, which art in heaven, &c.* Luke xi. 2. *To seek the king-*

*dom of God, and his righteousness, in the first place, and to take no thought for the morrow, Matt. vi. 33, 34. to be merciful, as your Father is merciful, Luke vi. 36. and perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect, Matt. v. 48. to beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves, Matt. vii. 15. to do unto all men as you would have them to do to you, ver. 12. to give alms of such things as ye have, or as much as ye are able, Luke xi. 41. to take heed and beware of covetousness, chap. xii. 15. to love one another, as he hath loved you, John xiii. 34. xv. 12. to love your enemies, to bless them that curse you, to do good to them that hate you, to pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you, Matt. v. 44. to take his yoke upon you, and to learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart, Matt. xi. 29. to celebrate the sacrament which he instituted at his last supper, in remembrance of him, Luke xxii. 19. to take heed, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, Luke xxi. 34. In a word, he commands, that your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven, Matt. v. 16. These are the express commandments of the Lord Jesus ; and unless you obey him in such plain and necessary things as these are, you may call him Lord and Master as often as you please, but he will never own you for his servants or disciples, neither have ye any ground to expect salvation from him : for though he be the *Author of eternal salvation*, he is so only to them who obey him, Heb. v. 9. Matt. vii. 21.*

Besides that, is Christ our Lord ? Then we are his servants ; so are all that are called by him, and own him to be their Lord ; as the apostle saith, *He that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is Christ's freeman ;* or rather, is made free by Christ, though not in respect of men, yet in respect of him, whose service is perfect freedom : *Likewise, he that is called, being free, is*

Christ's servant, 1 Cor. vii. 22. Howsoever free or noble he may be in respect of other men, he is still the servant of the Lord Christ, and is bound to serve him, and him only ; as the Colossians did, to whom the same apostle saith, *Ye serve the Lord Christ*, Col. iii. 24. God grant, that the same may be truly said of all here present.

But you will say perhaps, what service can we do for so great a Lord as our Lord is ? To that the apostle answereth in general, where he saith, *Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price : therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's*, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. God, our Lord and Saviour, hath bought us with a price ; and therefore we are not our own, but his, wholly his ; both our body and our spirit are his, and we should glorify him in both. And that is the only way whereby we can serve him, even by setting forth his honour and glory in the world ; which therefore we are bound to do, as much as we can, by confessing him before men, and owning that he is indeed our Lord and Master ; by asserting and vindicating, against all gainsayers, his divine power and authority over us, and all the world ; by waiting upon him in his house, and at his holy table, whensoever he is pleased to call us ; by worshipping and adoring him as our Lord and our God, whensoever we come into his special presence ; by celebrating and praising his glory, his power, his goodness, and the wonderful works that he hath done for the sons of men, as we do all along in that divine hymn, *We praise thee, O God, we acknowledge thee to be the Lord* : by putting up all our prayers to God the Father only in his name, and trusting on him alone for God's acceptance of them ; by comforting his disconsolate, supporting his weak, and relieving his poor members ; by reproving such as dishonour his holy name, and persuading as many as we can to enter into his service, and glorify him in the world, by observing the rules that he hath set us, and

doing all such good works as he hath prepared us to walk in. In a word, as ever we desire to serve the Lord Christ, we must do all we can to shine as lights in the world, so as to excel all other professions in piety, in justice, in humility, in temperance, in patience, in purity, in charity, in every thing that is commendable and praiseworthy

By this means we shall shew forth the virtues and praises of him, who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light, and so do him all the service we can upon earth. And verily, he being our Lord and Master, we are all bound in duty and conscience thus to serve and glorify him in every thing we do, according to that of the apostle; *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*, 1 Cor. x. 31. *And whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*, Col. iii. 17 And that too, not only through the whole course of our life, but when we be called to it, in our death also; *for whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's*, Rom. xiv. 8. We are wholly his, and therefore should be wholly at his devotion and service: and to encourage us to it, let us hear what our Lord himself saith, *If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour*, John xii. 26. And what can we desire more? What greater happiness can we have, than to live with our Lord himself, in whose presence is fulness of joy? What greater honour than to be honoured by him, whom all things in the world honour? Yet, this happiness, this honour have all they who serve the Lord Christ, in truth and sincerity of heart: which therefore God grant we may all for the future do.

I am sure it highly concerns us all to do it. For, is Jesus Christ our Lord and Master? Then be sure he will one day call us to an account, how we have served

him, and reward or punish us according as we have or have not done it as we ought. We may be confident of it, for he himself hath said he will, and hath told us withal, that they who serve him truly and faithfully upon earth, shall be advanced to his kingdom and glory; but that every idle and unprofitable servant shall be cast into utter darkness. And therefore we had need look about us, and make it the whole study and business of our lives, to do him all the service we can, to improve all those opportunities and talents which he put into our hands, for his use, and to finish the work which he hath given us to do, even to glorify him upon earth. *Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.*

SERMON XXXIV.

THE BLESSED ESTATE OF THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN
CHRIST.

JOHN XX. 29.

Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

ALL the holy Scriptures being given by divine inspiration, may truly, upon that account, be called *the oracles of God*. But so much of them as was spoken by Christ, when he was upon earth, hath another great title also unto that name, in that it was not only inspired or dictated by the Spirit, but uttered also by the mouth of God himself; for so was every thing that he spoke: it was spoken by God himself, with his own, though an human mouth. And therefore it is no wonder, that so much wisdom and goodness, as well as truth, appears in all his sayings, more than in any other whatsoever; as might easily be shewn in many respects: I shall mention at present only one; which is, that when he spoke, as he often did, only upon some particular occasion, he ordered his words so, that they were not only proper and pertinent to that occasion, but likewise of constant and general use to all mankind, that all might be some way or other edified by every thing he said to any. As when some told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifice, he said, *Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all*

the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, nay: which was sufficient for the present purpose, to shew, that those Galileans should not be censured or judged to be greater sinners, because they suffered more than others: and then he adds, for the perpetual instruction of all men, *But except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*, Luke xiii. 3. When some asked him, whether it was lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar? he, upon the sight of a piece of money current among them, with a Cæsar's head upon it, gave them a general rule to be observed, not only by them in this, but by all men in every thing relating either to God or the king, saying, *Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's*, Matt. xxii. 21. When he heard a certain woman crying out, and saying to him, *Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked*; he told her and all others, who are rather to be esteemed happy, how they may all become so, saying, *Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it*, Luke xi. 28. The same may be observed all along in the Gospels. Whatsoever our Saviour said, though the occasion of his saying it was ever so private and particular, yet he still said something or other upon it, that was generally necessary for all mankind to know.

This I have observed here, because it will serve as a key to open and explain the words of my text, spoken by our Lord upon a particular occasion, which was this: he being risen from the dead, upon the first day of the week, the same day at evening appeared to all his apostles, except St. Thomas, who happened not to be with them. The rest, soon after meeting with him, told him they had seen the Lord: but he was so far from believing it, that he said, *Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe*, ver 25. The apostle little thought that his Lord heard and knew what he said, as he most

certainly did: for eight days after appearing again to his apostles, St. Thomas also being with them, he singles him out from among the rest, and bids him try the experiment, without which, he had said, that he would not believe; saying to him, *Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing,* ver 27 Which St. Thomas having accordingly done, he presently professed his belief, by saying to him, *My Lord and my God.* Whereupon Jesus saith unto him, *Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

Where he first gives the apostle a tacit reproof for his not believing without seeing; *Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed;* implying, that this was not believing him or his other apostles, but his own eyes. Which though it may be truly called, as it is here, believing; yet it is such believing, as is of little value with men, of less with God, in that it is not grounded upon his authority, but upon a man's own senses. But having said this to his apostle, our Saviour, according to his usual divine manner, before spoken of, turns his discourse from him to all mankind, that all may know what that true faith is, which hath blessedness entailed upon it; and how blessed a thing it is to believe those things which we never saw, saying, *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* He speaks indefinitely, not of believing only his resurrection, which gave him the occasion of saying it, but of believing in general whatsoever God hath revealed; and we are therefore bound to believe, although we never saw it, nor have any other ground to believe it, but only his word.

This therefore is that which I shall now endeavour, by his assistance, to explain; not that the words themselves need any explaining, for they are as plain as any

words can make them, but that the truth contained in them may be set in such a light, that we may all see into the bottom of it, and thereby know how we may attain to true blessedness: for which purpose, we shall first consider what it is to believe things which we never saw, and what ground we have to do it; and then wherein they, who do so, are blessed. As for the first, I need not tell you what it is to believe in general; for you all know, that we are said to believe a thing when we do not doubt, but are fully persuaded of it. This is the usual signification of the word, both in our common conversation, and likewise in the holy Scriptures, where faith or believing is commonly opposed to doubting: as where our Saviour saith to St. Peter, *O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?* Matt. xiv. 31 and to all his disciples, *If ye have faith, and doubt not,* chap. xxi. 21. *And if he shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass,* Mark xi. 23. *He that doubteth,* saith St. Paul, *is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith,* Rom. xiv. 23. To the same purpose is that of St. James, *but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, or nothing doubting,* as the word διακρινόμενος signifies, James i. 6. From all which places, it appears, that according to the Scripture, as well as common use of the word, doubting is directly contrary to faith, or believing; and that a man can be properly said to believe a thing only so far as he doth not doubt, but is fully persuaded of it in his own mind.

Thus St. Paul expresseth the greatness of Abraham's faith, by his being fully persuaded, *that what God had promised, he was able also to perform,* Rom. iv. 21. And his own, by saying, *I am persuaded,* chap. viii. 38. The word in the original is *ἐπίσταναι*, from whence comes the Greek word *πίστις*, which we all along translate *faith*, and from thence *πιστεύω*, *to believe*; which words therefore, according to their etymology, as well as com-

mon use, must needs signify such a faith, or such believing a thing, whereby we are fully persuaded of the truth and certainty of it.

Now there are several ways whereby we come to be thus persuaded of a thing, or to believe it : some things we are persuaded of from the testimony of our senses ; as we see a thing to be white, or black, we taste it to be sweet or bitter, and therefore do not doubt, but are persuaded it is so ; and so may be truly said to believe it : as it is said of St. Peter in this chapter, that *he saw and believed*, ver 8. and of St. Thomas in my text, *Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed*. For in such cases, although our senses move, or induce us to think, or be persuaded a thing is so as they represent it, yet the thought or persuasion itself is an act not of the senses, but of the soul, and as such may properly be called faith or believing, as it is here.

Other things we are persuaded of by our reason, either immediately upon the first proposal of them to our consideration, or else by necessary consequences of one thing upon another, till we come at last to that which fixed our thoughts, so that our minds rest satisfied in it, as a necessary result from such premises ; and therefore we are said to be persuaded of it. But such kind of rational persuasions also take their first rise very often from our senses : as in the case before us, St. Thomas saw Christ after he had been dead, of the same visage and stature, and in all respects just so as he used to see him before ; and he put his finger into the holes which the nails had made in his hands, and the spear in his side, and so felt them to be really such as the nails and spear had made ; and from thence concluded, that this must be the same person that he knew before, and saw thus pierced upon the cross, and dead ; and, by consequence, was persuaded, or believed, that he was indeed risen from the dead. But this he could not but now believe in a manner, whether he would or no, having so plain and sensible a demonstration of it. And

that is the reason that his faith is here reproved, as not comparable to that whereby a man believes what he never saw.

But there are other things which we are persuaded of, or believe, upon the testimony, not of our own senses or reason, but that of other men's; who telling us of any thing which they have seen, or heard, or know, we, without consulting our own senses or reason, usually take their word for it, and believe it to be so as they say, only because they say it; which kind of belief, or persuasion, is as common among mankind as any of the other before mentioned: and it is that indeed, without which we could have no satisfaction in conversing with one another.

These are the several ways whereby we usually come to believe, or be persuaded of one thing rather than another; but they are all liable to very great mistakes, so that we cannot certainly depend upon any of them singly, nor upon all together. But whatsoever we are thus persuaded of, we have still cause to doubt whether it be so or no, and therefore cannot in reason be fully and certainly persuaded of it: for we find by experience that our senses often deceive us, that our reason frequently fails in its deductions, of one thing from another, and that all the rest of mankind are apt to be mistaken as well as we; or if they be not mistaken themselves, we, not knowing their thoughts, can never be sure but that they may have a mind to impose upon us, by telling us that for true, which they themselves know to be false: and, by consequence, whatsoever thoughts come into our heads any of these ways, we can never form them into a firm belief, or full persuasion, that what we think is really true, and such as we think it to be. So that if we had no other grounds but such as these are whereupon to build our faith, we should be always wavering and doubtful, and never fix upon any thing as a sure and certain truth, how much soever we are concerned to believe it to be so; and all by reason

of our fall in Adam, whereby our senses and reason, and all mankind, are so corrupted, that whatsoever knowledge we have by their means, is at the best no more than mere guess and conjecture.

But behold now, and admire the infinite goodness and mercy of God to fallen man, who, knowing what uncertainties we are put to, even in things of the greatest moment, and such as belong to our everlasting peace, hath found out another way whereby we may come to know them, and such a way as can never fail. For he being willing that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth, he himself hath revealed and declared all such truths as are necessary to our salvation : so that we have his word for them, which is more, infinitely more, than the concurrent testimony of our senses, our reason, and all mankind would have been, if they had all continued in their best and first estate ; yea, so much, that it is impossible that any thing more could be ever done, whereby to assure and certify us of them : *for God being truth itself*, as the apostle saith, *he cannot lie*, Tit. i. 2. *Yea, it is impossible for him to lie*, Heb. vi. 18. every lie, or falsehood, being a contradiction to his very nature. And therefore what God saith must needs be true, and therefore to be believed, because he saith it : for when he hath once said it, there is no room left for hesitancy, or doubting whether it be so or no ; for it cannot but be just so as he saith it is or shall be. And how much soever any truths may seem above our understanding and comprehension, yet if they come attested by his divine infallible authority, we have infinitely more ground to be persuaded of them, than we are of any thing that we ourselves may seem to comprehend or understand. And if our minds be right set to receive any truth at all, they must needs receive such in the highest manner, and with the strongest faith that they are capable of.

And yet this is the course which Almighty God hath

taken, whereby to inform and persuade mankind of all necessary truths, all along from the beginning of the world: Adam was no sooner fallen by the instigation of the old serpent, but God himself said, *The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head*, Gen. iii. 15. and so passed his own word for it, that Adam himself and his posterity might have the firmest ground that could be to believe that one should be born of a woman, which should destroy the works of the devil, and so restore mankind to their first estate. But seeing this word was not to be actually fulfilled till about four thousand years after, (therefore called, *the fulness of time*, Gal. iv. 4.) when about half that time was passed, God was pleased to renew, and repeat it again to Abraham, who living two thousand years after Adam, was just the middle person between him and Christ: for it was God himself also that said to Abraham, *In thee, and in thy seed, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*, Gen. xii. 3. xviii. 18. xxii. 18. whereby he plainly signified, that what he had before said concerning the seed of the woman in general, should be fulfilled in the seed of Abraham; but that all nations and families upon earth, as well as his, should be blessed by it, and therefore ought to believe so.

After this, God in all ages raised up prophets, by whom he spake his mind, and revealed his will all along, till at length he did it by his only-begotten Son too; as the apostle observes, saying, *God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son*, Heb. i. 1, 2. It was God therefore who spoke by the prophets as well as by his Son, the prophets being no more concerned, but only as his heralds to proclaim his divine will and pleasure: they uttered the words, but the words they uttered were put into their mouths by God himself; as our Saviour said to his apostles, *It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you*, Matt.

x. 20. So it was with the prophets ; *for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,* 2 Pet. i. 21 They spake not of their own heads, nor what they themselves would, but what God would have them say ; so that it was his word they spake, his will they declared : and therefore cried out, *Thus saith the Lord*, that people might take notice, that what they were now to say, was not their own words, but God's ; and therefore should accordingly hearken to it, and receive it as such ; as we find the Thessalonians did : for St. Paul writing to them saith, *For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God,* 1 Thess. ii. 13. The word which St. Paul preached, though they heard it of him, yet it was not his word, nor the word of any man, but it was in deed and in truth the word of God himself ; and they received it as spoken to them from God : and so all ought to receive whatsoever was spoken by Moses and the prophets, or by Christ and his apostles, and is now written in the books of the Old and New Testament ; for it is all equally the word of God ; all Scripture, as the apostle saith, *being given by inspiration of God,* 2 Tim. iii. 16. And therefore whosoever spoke or wrote it, it was still God's word they spoke or wrote ; and all men are bound to look upon it, and receive it with the same respect and reverence as if God had spoken it to them with his own mouth, or had written it with his own finger, as he did the Ten Commandments.

Now in this his most holy word, as it hath pleased Almighty God to command many things, all which we are bound to do therefore, because he commands them ; and to forbid many things, all which we are therefore bound to avoid, because he forbids them : so there are many other things which he is pleased to say, all which

we are bound to believe therefore, because he saith them : as for example, some things he affirms concerning himself, his wisdom, his power, his omnipresence, his goodness, his justice, his mercy, and all his other perfections and works that he hath done concerning his Son, his divinity, his incarnation, his life, his passion, his resurrection, his ascension, and session at the right hand of the Father ; concerning his Holy Spirit, his divine power, his procession, his gifts, and wonderful operations in the world ; concerning the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and many other remarkable persons, and what they did in their several generations. Some things he hath been pleased to promise to those who believe and obey him ; as that he will be merciful unto them, and bless them, and keep them from all evil, and give them all the good things they can desire, both in this world, and the next. Some things he hath said by way of threatening, to those who refuse to believe and serve him ; as that he will punish and afflict them, in their souls, bodies, estates, relations, or the like ; and at last give them their portion with the devil and his angels. Some things also he hath been pleased to foretel, concerning particular persons or nations, or else concerning all mankind in general ; as that they all shall rise again at the last day, and stand before Christ's tribunal, and there receive according to what they have done, whether it be good or evil ; and accordingly, the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal.

These and such like things which God hath said in his holy word, although we never saw them, nor perhaps can understand how they should be so as he saith they are, or shall be ; yet we have the greatest reason that can be to be fully persuaded of the truth and certainty of them, in that we have the word of God himself, his infallible testimony, his divine authority for it. And they who are thus accordingly persuaded in their hearts of the truth of such things which they never saw, merely

upon God's word, they may be truly said to believe, in a Gospel sense, as having and exercising that faith, which, the apostle saith, *is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*, Heb. xi. 1 As they hope for the good things which are promised in the holy Scriptures, so believing that God himself hath promised them, they are as fully persuaded, as confident, that they shall have them, as if they had them already; and so have them in effect, already subsisting in them: and they are as sure and certain of those things which he hath there said, although they have never seen them, as if they had seen them, or rather much more, as knowing that their senses may deceive them, but God cannot. And these are they which our Saviour here pronounceth blessed, saying, *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

That they are blessed, we cannot doubt, having Christ's own word for it; but wherein their blessedness consisteth, and how great it is, is a matter that deserves our consideration and enquiry: for which purpose we may observe, that as God made the world by his word, so it is by his word also that he upholds and governs the world in general, and mankind in a particular manner, ordering and disposing of them, according as they do or do not believe it. He had no sooner formed man, and put him into the garden that he had planted for him, but he presently said to him, *Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die*, Gen. ii. 16, 17 If Adam had believed what God then said, he would never have ventured to eat of that forbidden fruit: but believing what the serpent said to the woman, rather than what God said to him, he ate of it, and so poisoned and destroyed himself, and his whole posterity, then contained in him. But so great is the love of God to mankind, that notwithstanding their fall through unbelief in their first parents, yet

he was pleased so to order it, that none of them but might rise again, and be restored to their first estate, unless they themselves, every one in his own person, were guilty of the same fault, *even of unbelief*

For God hath spoken his mind, as I observed before, in all ages to mankind ; and hath caused it to be written too, that men might always know what he hath said, and what he would therefore have them to believe, that they might be saved. What St. John saith of his Gospel, is true also of all the holy Scriptures : *These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name*, John xx. 31.

But if, after all, men will not believe, *they make God a liar*, 1 John v. 10. which is the greatest affront and dishonour they can offer to his divine goodness and truth, and therefore are justly condemned ; as the Judge of the whole world hath told us, saying, *He that believeth not shall be damned*, Mark xvi. 16. And, *He that believeth on him, is not condemned ; but he that believeth not, is condemned already*, John iii. 18. He is condemned to *that everlasting fire, that is prepared for the devil and his angels* ; which is therefore called, *the portion of unbelievers*, Luke xii. 46. as being allotted for all unbelievers, as such, and for no other.

Whereas, on the other side, they who believe God, and so give him the honour that is due to his most sacred name and word, are so far from being condemned, that they are blessed by him ; blessed in the highest manner that he himself can bless them. It is not in my power to reckon up all the blessings that he confers upon them, much less to describe the greatness of them. I shall therefore only direct you to such places in God's own word, which may give you so much light into it, that you may clearly see into the truth of this divine proposition, uttered by truth, by the word of God himself ; *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed*.

They are blessed with profit and comfort from the word of God, whensoever they read, or hear it read or preached to them; *for it works effectually in them that believe*, 1 Thess. ii. 13. and in none else, Heb. iv. 2.

They are blessed with pure, and clean, and holy hearts; *for God purifieth their hearts by faith*, Acts xv. 9. *And they are sanctified by faith that is in Christ*, Acts xxvi. 18.

They are blessed with the pardon and remission of all their sins, through the blood of Christ; *for to him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins*, Acts x. 43.

They are blessed with the righteousness of God, whereby they are justified, or accounted righteous before God himself; *for they are justified by faith*, Gal. ii. 16. *As Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness*, Gen. xv. 6. Rom. iv. 3. *Which is therefore called the righteousness of God by faith*, Phil. iii. 9. Rom. iii. 22. *And the righteousness of faith itself*, Rom. iv. 13. *And the righteousness which is of faith*, Rom. ix. 30.

They are blessed with the love and favour of God, the almighty Governor of the world; he is reconciled to them, and they are at peace with him: *for being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ*, Rom. v. 1.

They are blessed with the nearest relation that can be to the most high God, the chiefest good; they are his children, by adoption and grace; *for ye are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus*, Gal. iii. 26. *For as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name*, John i. 12.

They are blessed with a principle of new life, which directs, influenceth, and governs them in all their actions; *for they live by faith*, Habak. ii. 4. Heb. x.

37 *We live*, saith St. Paul, *by faith, and not by sight*, 2 Cor. v. 7 *And the life which I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*, Gal. ii. 20.

They are blessed with free access to God, and full assurance from him, that they shall have whatsoever they ask, that is truly good for them : *for what things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them*, Mark xi. 24.

They are blessed with success and prosperity in all their undertakings, for God's glory and their own good ; *Believe the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper*, 2 Chron. xx. 20.

They are blessed with power to resist the devil, so as to make him fly from them ; *Above all things, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked*, Eph. vi. 16. Luke xxii. 32.

They are blessed with conquest and victory over the world ; *for this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God ?* 1 John v. 4, 5.

They are blessed with a kind of omnipotence ; *for all things are possible to him that believeth*, Mark ix. 23. *I can do all things*, saith St. Paul, *through Christ that strengtheneth me*, Phil. iv. 13.

They are blessed with God's acceptance of what they do, *for by faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice unto God than Cain*, Heb. xi. 4. Gen. iv. 4. *But without faith it is impossible to please God*, Heb. xi. 6.

They are blessed with the gifts and graces of God's Holy Spirit ; *for he that believeth on me*, saith Christ, *out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This he spake of the Spirit, which they that believe in him should receive*, John vii. 38, 39. *In whom*, saith his apostle, *after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that*

Holy Spirit of promise, Eph. i. 13. And that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith, Gal. iii. 14.

They are blessed with the special presence of Christ himself, dwelling or residing continually in them ; *for Christ dwelleth in their hearts by faith, Eph. iii. 17. So that the power of Christ resteth upon them, 2 Cor. xii. 9.* as certainly as it did between the cherubims upon the ark, in the old law.

They are blessed with unspeakable joy and comfort, amidst all the changes and chances of this mortal life, through him in whom they believe, even Christ their Saviour ; *Whom having not seen, they love ; in whom though now they see him not, yet believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, 1 Pet. i. 8.*

And they are blessed at last with everlasting life, consisting of all the blessings that mankind is capable of ; *for God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life, John iii. 16.* And then they receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls, 1 Pet. i. 9.

Thus blessed are all they that believe : thus Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and Sarah, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses, and Joshua, and Rahab, were all blessed, and all by their faith, as the apostle shews at large, Heb. xi. and then adds, *What shall I more say ? for the time would fail me, to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah, of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets ; who, through faith, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword ; out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens, Heb. xi. 32, 33, 34.* And so he goes on, recounting the glorious things which the saints of old performed by their faith ; that faith which he there

saith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. From all which we may certainly conclude, that if we have any faith at all, we must needs believe what our Saviour here saith, *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

But where shall we find such blessed persons now? Some I hope there are, but not many, I fear, among us. Our Saviour himself said, *When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* Luke xviii. 8. If he should come, as we do not know but he may, in our days, I doubt he would find but little. There are many, I know, who profess to believe, but there are but few that do so. They who are born and bred where the Christian faith is professed, they, in course, profess it too: and because they own, or acknowledge, or at least do not deny the articles of it to be true, they therefore take it for granted that they believe them; whereas, if they search into their own hearts, they may easily find, that they are not fully persuaded of any one of them, so as to believe it as firmly as they do those things which they see or hear; and therefore are far from having such a faith as is due to the infallible word and testimony of God himself: for it is not with the mouth, but *with the heart, that man believeth unto righteousness*, Rom. x. 10. With the heart, when it is thoroughly convinced, and persuaded of the truth and certainty of God's word, and of every thing in it, then, and not till then, can a man be truly said to believe.

I say, of God's word, and of every thing in it; for he that doth not believe every thing, believes nothing as he ought to believe it: for no man can be said truly to believe any thing that is written in God's word, but he who therefore only believes it, because he hath God's word for it. But he hath God's word for every thing that is there written, for one thing as well as for another: and therefore, if he believes any one thing aright, he must needs believe every thing else, as well as that; which I therefore mention, because of the

great mistake that runs through the most part of the Christian world: for men commonly profess to believe some part of God's word, although at the same time they do not believe the rest. As for example, they profess to believe, that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world, and therefore hope to be saved by him: but if they really believed that, they could not but believe whatsoever else is affirmed, or promised, or threatened, or foretold in the word of God; and, by consequence, live accordingly. Which, seeing men generally do not, it is plain, that for all the great noise that is made about it, there is but little true faith in the world; there are but few so blessed, as to believe those things which they never saw.

But let us strive to be in the number of those few that are so: we all profess to believe the books of the Old and New Testament to be given by the inspiration of God, and therefore to be his word. I dare say, there is not a person among us that can or will deny it; but let us do what we profess; let us really believe so as to be fully persuaded in our minds, as we can be of any thing in the world, that whatsoever is there written, is written by God himself; and, by consequence, that what is there recorded, affirmed, or said, is infallibly true, although we never saw it; and what is there promised, or threatened, or foretold, shall as certainly be fulfilled, as if we saw it fulfilled already: which that we may, we must constantly and earnestly pray to God for it; for, as the apostle tells us, *faith is the gift of God*, Eph. ii. 8. But we have no ground to expect he should give us it any other way, than in the use of those means which he hath ordained in his church, whereby to beget and increase it in us. Now, as the same apostle saith, *faith cometh by hearing*, Rom. x. 17 not only by hearing of sermons, as some imagine, but by hearing the word of God either read, or any way made known to us; and by hearing it so, as to lay it up in our hearts, keep it in our memories, ruminate upon it in our minds,

and so act and exercise it upon all occasions, at all times, especially at the sacrament of the Lord's supper, where the great objects of our faith are represented to us, on purpose to strengthen and confirm it in us.

By the constant and sincere use of these means, there are none of us but may attain the divine art of believing those things which we never saw : and then how blessed, how happy shall we be ? Then we shall never hear or read God's holy word, but it will go to the very bottom of our hearts, and have its due effect upon us : then we shall never doubt of the great mysteries of our religion, but take God's word for them, whether we understand them or no : then we shall see the finger of God in all the wonderful works and miracles recorded in holy Scripture, and adore him for them, as if we had been present when he did them : then we shall constantly expect the great day, wherein God hath foretold us we must give account of all our actions, and accordingly strive to be always ready for it : then we shall tremble at every threatening that God hath denounced against impenitent and obdurate sinners, and dread the thoughts of being in the number of them : then all the promises which God hath made us will seem as so many strong holds, to which we may resort upon all occasions, and therefore shall never be afraid of evil tidings ; for our hearts will be always fixed, trusting in the Lord : then he that made us will have mercy upon us, pardon and accept us, admit us into the number of his own children, and lift up the light of his countenance upon us, so that we shall live continually under the rays of his divine love and favour : then we shall know, *that all things work together for our good* ; and that these *light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen ; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal*, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. Then we shall

be able to crucify the flesh, to withstand the temptations of the devil, to overcome this whole world, and live above, so as to have our conversations in heaven, where our treasure is, where our dear Lord and Saviour is, where our inheritance and estate lies : then we shall always live as under the eye of God, and have respect to him in every thing we do : then all things here below will appear to us in their proper colours ; for we shall look upon them as nothing, in comparison of those great and glorious objects, which our faith will continually represent unto us : then we shall have fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, and with the Holy Ghost, protecting, assisting, and directing us upon all occasions : then we shall be *stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, as knowing that our labour is not in vain in the Lord*, 1 Cor xv. 58.

What shall I say more ? When we have once learnt to live with a constant belief of those things which God hath revealed to us in his holy word, although we never saw them, we shall then be every way as blessed as we can wish to be : blessed wheresoever we are, blessed in whatsoever we do, and blessed in whatsoever we have ; blessed while we live, and blessed when we die ; and all by him, in whom we believe, though we never yet saw him, even our ever-blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ : *to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for ever.*

SERMON XXXV.

ADMISSION INTO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, BY BAPTISM,
NECESSARY TO SALVATION.

JOHN iii. 5.

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

OF all the sorts of creatures we know upon the face of the earth, there are none but what observe the laws, and answer the end of their creation, except mankind: but mankind are all fallen from their first estate, they are all gone out of the way they were made to walk in, and act quite contrary to what they were at first designed to do; and therefore might justly have been all reserved, together with the fallen angels, *in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.* But the almighty Creator of all things, for the manifestation of his infinite mercy and truth, was graciously pleased to find out a way, whereby mankind might be restored to their first estate, and be made as happy again, as if they had never fallen from it: and that was by his only-begotten Son, who, for that purpose, being in the form of God, of one substance with the Father, was pleased to take upon him the whole nature of man, uniting it to his own divine Person, and then to offer it up as a sacrifice for the sins and offences of all mankind, *by being obedient in it unto death, even the death of the cross:* by which means he became the *Saviour of all men, especially of those who*

believe. So that all men are capable of being saved by him, and they who believe shall most certainly be so.

For he, by virtue of what he did and suffered in their nature, and being himself both God and man, is the Mediator between God and them, always appearing in the presence of God, and there making intercession for them; that God would be graciously pleased to accept of his death instead of theirs, and for his sake give them all things necessary both for life and godliness; that they may become such as may be accepted of in him as righteous, and accordingly inherit eternal life. By means of this mediation or intercession, which *his only-begotten Son, in whom he is well pleased*, is continually making in heaven for them, the almighty Creator and Governor of the world is so far reconciled to them, that he looks upon them as his own children, takes them into his own particular care, *works in them both to will and to do* what he would have them; prevents, directs, and assists them by his Holy Spirit in what they do, and makes all things work together for their good; that they may serve him faithfully while they are upon earth, and be duly qualified to live with him and his holy angels in heaven: and then he takes them to himself, that they may enjoy him there, and praise him for ever, for all the blessings and favours which they have received through his Son Jesus Christ; and above all, for him, through whom they have received them.

Now seeing all our hopes of heaven, and of all things relating to our coming thither, are grounded wholly upon what our blessed Saviour is there doing for us; we who hope to obtain that glorious kingdom, through his merits and mediation for us, must take special care to observe and do whatsoever he requires in order thereunto: and particularly what he saith in the words which I have now read. For here we see, that notwithstanding all that he suffered upon earth, and is now doing in heaven for mankind, yet he positively asserts, *that except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he*

cannot enter into the kingdom of God. He doth not only say, that such a one shall not, but that he cannot enter into the kingdom of God; that none may ever expect it, but that all may look upon it as a thing impossible.

But the better to clear the way for our finding out the true sense and meaning of the words, it will be necessary to look back a little, and see how they come in. Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, hearing of the miracles which our Saviour did, could not but from thence conclude, that he was *a teacher come from God*; and therefore had a great mind to learn something of him: for which purpose he came to him, but, for fear of offending his brethren the Pharisees, he came by night. And while they were discoursing together, our Saviour took occasion to acquaint him, *that except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*, ver. 3. Nicodemus, not rightly understanding his meaning, wondered at the expression, and said, *How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?* ver. 4. Our Lord, not regarding the absurdity of such a question, but pitying the man's weakness, expressed his meaning in fuller and plainer terms, saying, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* He useth the same asseveration that he did before, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee*; that Nicodemus might take the more notice of it, and believe it upon his word, whom he had before acknowledged to be *a teacher come from God*. And although these words were spoken only to Nicodemus, they are left upon record, for the benefit of all mankind; that all who expect the kingdom of God, by Jesus Christ, may know from his own mouth, that none can enter into that kingdom, *except they be born of water and of the Spirit*.

That by *the kingdom of God*, or, as it is elsewhere called, *the kingdom of heaven*, in holy Scripture, is commonly meant that high and holy place, where the

saints and servants of God enjoy perpetual rest and felicity, none ever doubted ; and therefore I need not stand to prove it, but shall only observe, that this expression is used also in a larger sense, not only for the place itself, but likewise for the way that leads to it, that also being wholly under the rule and governance of Almighty God. And seeing he always *added to the church those who shall be saved*, or inherit eternal life and glory in heaven, Acts ii. 47 therefore the church militant upon earth, as well as that which is triumphant in heaven, is called also, *the kingdom of God*: and not only that part of it which is invisible, as being governed by the secret influences of God's special grace and Holy Spirit ; but also the visible, consisting of all that profess the true faith and fear of God, although many of them do no more than only profess it. And therefore our Saviour himself compares *the kingdom of heaven to a field, wherein tares are sown as well as wheat*, Matt. xiii. 24, 25. and to *a net that, being cast into the sea, gathereth of every kind of fish, both good and bad*, ver 47 But howsoever, as once the whole nation of the Jews, both good and bad, were the people of God, and had him in a peculiar manner for their king ; so now the whole church of Christ, or the congregation of faithful people all the world over, is properly the kingdom of God, where, in the administration of his word and sacraments, he exerciseth his power in the hearts of men, enlightening, renewing, and sanctifying them, so as to fit them to live with him in the other world ; and then he translates them into his kingdom in heaven, or rather to that part of his kingdom that is there settled : for, properly speaking, it is one and the same kingdom, in different places, and under different circumstances ; here it is militant, there triumphant ; here it consisteth of sinners as well as saints, there they are all saints ; here the saints themselves have many imperfections in them, there they are all perfect. But though many may be admitted into the kingdom of God upon earth, and yet,

through their own default, may not get to that which is in heaven ; yet none can get to that which is in heaven, but only such as are first admitted into the kingdom of God upon earth.

Now he who purchased this kingdom for mankind, and is himself the head of it, here tells us, *that except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into it.* Immediately before he had said, *that except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God ;* to shew the necessity of a man's being regenerated, and made another kind of creature than he was at first born, before he can be capable of seeing or enjoying the privileges and delights of that kingdom. But here, speaking of being *born of water and the Spirit*, he alters the phrase, and saith, without that a man *cannot enter into it* ; he cannot so much as be admitted into it, or made a member of that kingdom, so as to have any right or title to the delights and privileges of it. We have the word of Christ himself for it, and therefore may well believe it : for it is he who rules and governs this kingdom ; it is his own, he takes in and keeps out whom he pleaseth, and how he pleaseth to do it. And therefore it is not for us to argue the case with him, why he hath made this or that way for our entrance into his kingdom. We must give him thanks that he hath made any way at all for it, and take care to go in that way which he hath made, as ever we desire to enter in at all ; and that is, by being *born of water and of the Spirit* ; for he himself here saith, *that except a man be so, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

But what he means by being *born of water and of the Spirit*, is now made a question : I say now ; for it was never made so till of late years : for many ages together none ever doubted of it, but the whole Christian world took it for granted, that our Saviour, by these words, meant only that except a man be baptized according to his institution, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God ; this being the most plain and obvious

sense of the words, forasmuch as there is no other way of being born again of water as well as of the Spirit, but only in the sacrament of baptism.

To understand what he means by being born again, we must call to mind what he saith in another place, *My kingdom is not of this world*, John xviii. 36. though it is in this world, it is not of it; it is not a secular or earthly kingdom, but a kingdom purely spiritual and heavenly: *it is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*, Rom. xiv. 17. And therefore when a man is born into this world, he is not thereby qualified for the kingdom of God, nor hath any right or title to it, no more than as if he had not been born at all; but before he enter into that, he must be born again, he must undergo another kind of birth than he had before: he was before born of the flesh, he must now be born of the Spirit; otherwise he cannot be capable of entering into such a kingdom as is altogether spiritual. Thus our Lord himself explains his own meaning in my text, by adding immediately in the next words, *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*, ver. 6. As if he had said, he that is born, as all men are at first, only of the flesh, such a one is altogether carnal and sensual; and so can be affected with nothing but the sensible objects of this world: but he that is born of the Spirit of God, thereby becomes a spiritual creature, and so is capable of those spiritual things of which the kingdom of God consisteth, *even of righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*. And he whose mind is changed, and turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, is truly said to be born again, because he is quickened with another kind of life than he had before; and to be born of the Spirit of God, because it is by it that this new and spiritual life is wrought in him. So that he is now born into another world, even into the kingdom of God, where he hath God himself, of whom he is born, for his Father;

and the kingdom of God for his portion and inheritance. And therefore it is, that except a man be thus born of the Spirit, it is impossible he should enter into the kingdom of God ; seeing he can enter into it no other way, than by being born of the Spirit.

But that we may be thus born of the Spirit, we must be born also of water, which our Saviour here puts in the first place. Not as if there was any such virtue in water, whereby it could regenerate us ; but because this is the rite or ordinance appointed by Christ, wherein to regenerate us by his Holy Spirit ; our regeneration is wholly the act of the Spirit of Christ. But there must be something done on our parts in order to it ; and something that is instituted and ordained by Christ himself, which in the Old Testament was circumcision, in the New, baptism, or washing with water ; the easiest that could be invented, and the most proper to signify his cleansing and regenerating us by his Holy Spirit. And seeing this is instituted by Christ himself, as we cannot be born of water without the Spirit, so neither can we, in an ordinary way, be born of the Spirit without water, used or applied in obedience and conformity to his institution ; Christ hath joined them together, and it is not in our power to part them : he that would be born of the Spirit, must be born of water too.

This is that which the apostle also teacheth us, where he saith, that God our Saviour, according to his mercy, saves us by *the washing of regeneration, and by the renewing of the Holy Ghost*, Tit. iii. 5. By the washing with water, as the sign of our regeneration, and by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, as the thing signified, which is the same in effect with our being born *of water and of the Spirit*, and a clear explication of it.

But how we come to be born of water and of the Spirit together in the sacrament of baptism, appears most clearly from the commission which our Lord gave for the administration of it, saying to his apostles, *Go ye therefore, and make all nations disciples, baptizing*

them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Matt. xxviii. 19. So the words in the original plainly signify, and ought to be translated. I know that our own, and other European translations, render the words, *Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them*, &c. which gave the first occasion to the sect of the Anabaptists: for ignorant people imagining that our Saviour here commanded that all nations should be first taught, and then baptized, from thence concluded, that none ought to be baptized, till they are first taught the principles of the Christian religion; but the original word μαθητεύσατε will bear no such sense; for it never signifies to teach, but only to be, or to make disciples, as Matt. xxvii. 57 xiii. 52. Acts xiv. 21. And so it is constantly translated in all the oriental versions; and therefore we never heard of any Anabaptists in the eastern churches: and there would have been none among us, if people did but rightly understand the Scriptures, and particularly these words of our Saviour; in which he is so far from requiring it as necessary, that people should be taught before they are baptized, that he requires that to be done afterwards, saying in the words following, *Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you*, ver. 20.

But whosoever understands and consults the original words in this text, will plainly see, that our Saviour's meaning is, that not only Jews, but all nations should be made his disciples, by being *baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*: and, by consequence, that this is the way whereby to be *born of water, and of the Spirit*, as he speaks in my text. For as baptizing necessarily implies the use of water, so our being made thereby disciples of Christ, as necessarily implies our partaking of his Spirit: for all that are baptized, and so made the disciples of Christ, are thereby made the members of his body; and are therefore said to be *baptized into Christ*, Rom. vi. 3. Gal. iii. 27 But they who are in Christ, members of

his body, must needs partake of the Spirit that is in him their head. Neither doth the Spirit of Christ only follow upon, but certainly accompanies the sacrament of baptism, when duly administered according to his institution. For, as St. Paul saith, *by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body*, 1 Cor. xii. 13. So that in the very act of baptism, the Spirit unites us unto Christ, and makes us members of his body; and if of his body, then of his church and kingdom, that being all his body. And therefore all who are rightly baptized with water, being at the same time baptized also with the Holy Ghost, and so born both of water and the Spirit, they are, *ipso facto*, admitted into the kingdom of God, established upon earth; and if it be not their own fault, will as certainly attain to that which is in heaven.

Now from these words of our blessed Saviour, thus briefly explained from what he himself and his apostles have taught us in other places of the holy Scripture, many inferences may be raised, which are of great use, and much to be observed, especially in our days, wherein ignorant people are seduced by the devil and his agents into so many erroneous and dangerous opinions about the holy sacrament of baptism. I shall instance only in those which are most proper to convince such of their error, and confirm others in the truth. From hence, therefore, we may first observe, how necessary baptism is to our entrance into the kingdom of heaven, seeing he, by whom alone it is possible for any man to enter in, hath so positively affirmed, that *none can enter in, except they be baptized, or born of water and the Spirit*: which St. Peter was so sensible of, that when some asked him, and the rest of the apostles, *what they should do to be saved?* he answered roundly, *Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*, Acts ii. 38. Whereby he doth not only assure them in the name of God,

that upon their being baptized, they should infallibly receive the Holy Ghost to sanctify and regenerate them ; but this is the first and great thing which he adviseth every one to, as without which, not any one of them could ever enter into the kingdom of God, and be saved.

And the same apostle, when upon his first preaching unto the Gentiles, the Holy Ghost fell on them, so that they immediately spake with tongues, although some might have thought there had been no need of baptizing them who had already received the Holy Ghost ; yet he considering that this gift of the Holy Ghost was only to enable them to speak with tongues, not to regenerate them, he inferred from thence, that they ought the rather to be baptized : *Can any man, saith he, forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we ?* Acts x. 47. And therefore *commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord,* ver. 48. Which he would never have done, if it was not necessary for them to be born of water and of the Spirit. And though our Lord himself appeared to Saul, as he was going to Damascus, and called him with his own mouth, yet he also must be baptized, before he could be filled with the Holy Ghost, and so made a disciple, much less an apostle, to him who had called him, Acts ix. 17, 18. xiii. 16.

There are many such places in holy Scripture, which shew the great necessity of baptism, where it may be had ; but I shall add only these remarkable words, which our Saviour spake to his apostles after his resurrection : *He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved ; but he that believeth not, shall be damned,* Mark xvi. 16. Where we see, that he, by whom alone it is possible for any man to be saved, makes baptism necessary to salvation as well as faith : he saith indeed, *He that believeth not shall be damned :* but he doth not say, *He that believeth shall be saved,* whether he

be baptized or no ; *but he that believeth and is baptized* : as all to be sure are, or at least desire to be, who truly believe in him. For all who truly believe in Christ for their salvation, must believe what he hath said to be true, and accordingly do whatsoever he requires in order to it. But he requires all that would be saved by him to be first baptized into him ; and as plainly asserts in my text, that *except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God* : and therefore it is in vain to expect it.

This I would desire all here present to take special notice of, that you may not be deceived by a sort of people risen up among us, who being led, as they pretend, by a light within them, are fallen into such horrid darkness, and damnable heresies, that they have quite laid aside the sacrament of baptism, and affirm, in flat contradiction to our Saviour's words, that they may be saved without it. I pray God to open their eyes, that they may not go blindfold into eternal damnation. And I advise you all, as you desire not to apostatize from the Christian religion, and as you tender your eternal salvation, take heed that you be never seduced by them, under any pretence whatsoever ; but rather, if you be acquainted with any of them, do what you can to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God again ; that they may receive forgiveness of their sins, and inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith in him, who said, *Except a man be born of water, &c.*

Not only a man, in contradiction to a child, or a woman, but, as it is in the original, Ἐὰν μὴ τις, except any one, any human creature, whatsoever, man, woman, or child, *except he be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*. So that our Lord is so far from excluding children from baptism, that he plainly includes them ; speaking in such general terms, on purpose that we may know, that no sort of

people, old or young, can ever be saved without it. And so he doth too, where he commands, as was observed before, that *all nations should be made disciples, by being baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost* : for, under all nations, children must needs be comprehended, which make a great, if not the greatest part of all nations. And although these general expressions be sufficient to demonstrate the necessity of infant baptism, yet foreseeing that ignorant and unlearned people would be apt to wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction, he elsewhere commands children particularly to be brought unto him, saying, *Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not ; for of such is the kingdom of God*, Mark x. 14. But if the kingdom of God consist of children, as well as other people, they must of necessity be baptized, or born of water and the Spirit ; for otherwise he himself saith, *they cannot enter into the kingdom*.

Hence it is, that we find the apostles often baptizing whole families, children, if any, as well as others : and the whole catholic church, in all places and ages ever since, hath constantly admitted the children of believing parents into the church, by baptizing them according to the institution and command of our Saviour ; none ever making any question of it, but all Christians, all the world over, taking it for granted, that it ought to be done, till of late years.

But of late years, there is a sect sprung up among us, who, contrary to Christ's command, forbid little children to be brought unto him by baptism, the only way whereby it is possible for them to come to him ; and so make the children of Christian parents in a worse condition than the Jewish were ; and the Law more favourable than the Gospel. How they will answer it at the last day, I know not : but I know, that it greatly behoves all that have any care of their own, or their children's good, to take heed of this sort of people, *who*

creep into houses, and lead captive silly women, laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, 2 Tim. iii. 7 And by good words and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple, Rom. xvi. 18. But they must be very simple indeed, who suffer themselves to be deceived by them, who so directly contradict our Saviour's words, and deny that to children, without which he himself hath said, *they cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

It is to be farther observed, that our Lord here saith, *Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit;* of water in general, without specifying how much or how little, or how to be applied, whether by dipping, or washing, or sprinkling; having made it so necessary, he hath made it likewise as easy as possible. He only requires water, the most common thing that is, to be used and applied with such a form of words as he hath prescribed, without determining the quantity, or any other circumstances, which might sometimes make it difficult or dangerous, or perhaps impracticable. And therefore, although in hot countries the persons baptized were usually dipped in water, or washed all over, yet the washing any one part, or sprinkling water upon them, hath the same effect: it is not the quantity of the water, but the institution of Christ, to which the promise of being born again is annexed. One drop of water serves to this purpose as well as a river; and one part of the body, in this case, is as much as the whole: as we may learn from our Lord and Master himself.

For when he, to shew the necessity of our being washed by him, said to St. Peter, *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me;* St. Peter said unto him, *Lord, not my feet only, but my hands and my head.* Jesus said unto him, *He that is washed, needeth not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit,* John xiii. 10. Whereby he hath taught us, that if any one part, as the face, the hands, the feet, have water applied to it, according to his prescription, and so is washed by him,

the whole is thereby cleansed : for it is not the water that cleanseth, but the blood of Christ signified by the water, applied according to his institution, which is therefore called *the blood of sprinkling*, Heb. xii. 24. because it is then sprinkled upon us. St. Peter also speaks of *the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*, 1 Pet. i. 2. Which is most plainly signified, by sprinkling the water upon the person baptized, according to the custom that hath prevailed in all, except in very hot countries. Which seems also to be intimated by God himself, in the prophet Ezekiel, where, speaking of the blessed times under the Gospel, he saith, *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean. A new heart also will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you*, Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26. For this is the same, in effect, with our being born of water and the Spirit, as our Saviour here expresseth it.

But after all we must observe, that although our blessed Saviour here saith, *that except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God* ; yet he doth not say, that every one that is so born, shall inherit eternal life. It is true, all that are baptized, or born of water and the Spirit, are thereby admitted into the church or kingdom of God upon earth ; but except they submit to the government, and obey the laws established in it, they forfeit all their right and title to the kingdom of heaven. They are brought into a state of salvation, but unless they continue in it, and live accordingly, they cannot be saved. For, as St. Peter observeth, *baptism now saves us, not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*, 1 Pet. iii. 21. Baptism puts us into the way to heaven, but unless we walk in that way, we can never come thither. When we were baptized, we were born of water and the Spirit, so as to have the seed of grace sown in our hearts, sufficient to enable us to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, to overcome tempt-

ations, to believe aright in God our Saviour, and to obey and serve him faithfully all the days of our life. And we then promised to do so : for being asked, whether we would do so or no, we answered, by ourselves or sureties, that we would. And if we afterwards live in good conscience towards God, answerably to the profession and promise that we then made to him, we shall certainly be saved through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the intercession that he makes at the right hand of God for us. But if we neglect to perform what he then promised, and so do not answer the end of our baptism, by keeping our consciences void of offence towards God and men, we lose all the benefit of it, and shall as certainly perish, as if we had never been baptized.

Wherefore, brethren, we had all need look about us : I hope there are none here present, but who are baptized, and so born of water and the Spirit : if there be any that are not, I must advise them to take care of themselves. Do not mind what ignorant or designing people tell you, but consider what Christ, your only Saviour, hath told you : he hath told you, *that except ye be born of water and of the Spirit, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* And if ye care not whether ye enter into the kingdom of God or not, ye may still continue as ye are, *without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world,* Eph. ii. 12. as mere heathens as any in the Indies, and in a worse condition than they : forasmuch as ye live in a place where ye may be made Christians if ye will ; and if ye will not, it will be more tolerable for them, than for you, at the last day. But if ye desire to be fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household and kingdom of God, put off your baptism no longer. It was your parents' fault that you were not baptized before ; it is your own if ye be not baptized now : and

therefore be advised to fit yourselves for it, as soon as possible; lest as ye have hitherto lived, so ye die too without it, and so be damned for ever.

And as for you who are already baptized, and born of water and of the Spirit, remember the promise which ye then made, and perform it. Remember how ye then renounced the devil, the world, and the flesh; and let them not therefore have dominion over you: remember the articles of faith which you then professed to believe, and hold fast your profession without wavering: remember the holy commandments which you then promised to keep, and do all you can to walk constantly in all of them: remember also the great privileges which God Almighty then conferred upon you, in case you keep your word with him. You were then made the members of Christ, and so interested in all the merits of his death and passion: you were then taken out of the world, and translated into the church of Christ, to be instructed, governed, assisted, protected, sanctified, justified, and saved by him: you were then made the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ: and therefore heirs of the kingdom of heaven, and eternal life; which you cannot miss of, unless you provoke your heavenly Father to disinherit you, by the neglect of your duty to him, and by the breach of the promise which you made, when you were admitted into this happy state, and by not repenting of it while ye may.

Wherefore, if ye have broke the promise which ye made when ye were baptized, as I fear ye all have, repent immediately, and set yourselves in good earnest for the future, upon keeping it in all respects. Ye were then born of the Spirit, and so have it always ready to assist you. By his assistance therefore live now as becomes the children of God, and the heirs of heaven: avoid whatsoever ye know to be offensive to your heavenly Father, and do all ye can to please him. Live

above this world, and let your conversation be where your inheritance lies. Strive all ye can to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called ; that ye may shine as lights in the world, and so be *meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light* ; where ye will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of your Father. *Which God grant we may all do, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

SERMON XXXVI.

COMING TO CHRIST THE ONLY MEANS OF SALVATION.

JOHN v. 40.

And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

THESE words being spoken by Christ himself to the Jews, must needs be true of them: and we have too much cause to fear they are so likewise of most of those which are called Christians; and among them, of those also which are here present: insomuch, that if Christ was with us, as he was then with the Jews, he might truly say the same words over again here. But why do I make it a question, whether he be here or no? when he himself saith, *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*, Matt. xviii. 20. I doubt not but here is that number at least met together in his name; and therefore am confident, that he is as really with us now in this place, as he was among the Jews when he first spake these words. And though we cannot see him any other way than with the eye of faith, yet we may hear him repeat them over again by his unworthy servant, saying to you that are here present, *Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.*

A sharp saying indeed! enough to cut us all to the heart with fear, lest we should be in the number of those whom our Lord here means: for if we be, and still continue to be so, we shall be lost and undone for ever.

And therefore it is as much as our lives are worth, to understand his meaning in these words aright, and what he here teacheth us ; that we may be able to pass a right judgment upon ourselves, and know what will become of us at the last day. For which purpose we shall, by his assistance, consider,

First, What he here means by *life*.

Secondly, That this life is to be had only in him.

Thirdly, That none can have it of him, unless they go to him for it.

Fourthly, That nevertheless, men generally will not go to Christ, no, not for life itself: *Ye will not*, saith he, *come to me, that ye might have life*.

First therefore, as the word *death*, in holy Scripture, is put for all evil, so is *life* for all that is good to mankind: *See, I have set before thee*, said God to Moses, *this day, life and good, and death and evil*, Deut. xxx. 15. And seeing the happiness which God hath prepared for his people in the other world consisteth in the full enjoyment of all that is good for them ; therefore it is called life, and eternal life, because it shall last for ever. Now this is that which our Lord here means by life ; for he is here convincing the Jews that he was the Messiah, the Son of God, and Saviour of the world : this he proves from the testimony that his Father had given of him, from what St. John the Baptist had said concerning him, from the works that he himself had done among them, and, lastly, from the Scriptures of the Old Testament, which they themselves received and owned to be the word of God: *Search the Scriptures*, saith he, *for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me*, ver. 39. And then he adds, *And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life*. As if he had said, ye believe the Scriptures to be given by inspiration of God, to direct you in the way to eternal life, and therefore ye expect to find there how to obtain it : and if ye search the Scriptures, ye may there see, that they testify of me, that I am the

Christ, the Son of God, by whom alone ye can have eternal life ; and yet for all that, ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. From whence it is plain, that by life he means that eternal life before spoken of : which though it be perfected only in the other world, it is begun in this. At our new birth, when a man is truly regenerated, or born again of God, and made his child by adoption and grace, then the Holy Spirit of God is breathed into him, and becomes the principle of eternal life in him : by which means he shall not only have it hereafter, but he already *hath everlasting life*, John vi. 47, 54. *He is already passed from death to life*, chap. v. 24. and so hath not only a right and title to it, *but he hath eternal life abiding in him*, 1 John iii. 15. The seeds of it are already sown in his heart, which grow up insensibly till they bring forth fruit to perfection ; till the soul at last is refined and exalted to the highest degree of purity and perfection that it is capable of in the other world.

There all that have this life, live in perpetual rest and felicity : for their spirits are there made perfect, equal in all respects to the holy angels themselves. All the powers and faculties of their souls being reduced to so exact and excellent a temper, such as they were at first made of, that they are never disturbed or discomposed at any thing that God hath made or doth, but are extremely refreshed and delighted with it. For there they clearly see the infinite wisdom, and power, and goodness of God shining forth in all his works ; so that every thing that God hath made, affords them matter of extraordinary joy and pleasure : yea, so far as creatures are capable of it, they see the Creator himself *face to face*, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. and have the light of his countenance shining continually about them, upon them, and in them ; whereby their blessed souls are filled with all true joy and pleasure, as much as it is possible for them to hold. And at the last day, their bodies also shall be fashioned like to the glorious body of Christ

himself, Phil. iii. 21 So that from that time forward, *they shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father*, Matt. xiii. 43. What a glorious, what an happy life is this, thus to live continually in perfect ease and quiet in our minds, in peace and plenty of all things we can desire, in the blessed company of saints and angels, in the special love and favour of Almighty God, and in all the bliss, and honour, and glory, that he who made us can confer upon us, and that too, not only for some ages, but for ever and ever ? This is that life, that eternal life, which our Lord here speaks of, and supposeth that we may all have it if we will ; but saith, men will not come unto him for it : *Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.*

Where we may observe, secondly, that this life is to be had in Christ Jesus, and in him only This he himself here plainly implies, and the holy Scriptures all along declare : *for this is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son*, 1 John v. 11. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, *because God hath sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him*, chap. iv. 9. He himself saith, *that he giveth eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him*, John xvii. 2. So that none ever had life, but by him : but by him any man may have it, who is therefore called life itself, John xiv. 6. Col. iii. 4. and *eternal life*, 1 John v. 20. All things relating to it being founded in him, as the sole author, root, origin, and foundation of it. It is he that purchased life for us ; it is he that hath promised it to us ; it is he that prepares it for us, and us for it ; and it is he that, after all, bestows it upon us. *My sheep*, saith he, *know my voice, and I know them, and they follow me ; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hands*, John x. 28.

To make this as clear as I can, we may observe, that man being created in the image of God, was made im-

mortal: so that if he had never sinned, he had never died. But the first man, in whom the rest were all contained, by sinning against his Maker, in eating the fruit which he had forbidden him, made himself and his whole posterity obnoxious to the death which God had threatened in that case, death in general, both temporal and eternal; both that whereby the soul is separated from the body, and that whereby it is separated from God himself, and so from every thing that is good. *Thus by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned,* Rom. v. 12.

But Jesus Christ, the second Adam, having taken away the sin of the world, he hath thereby abolished death, so that all mankind, by him, may have life again. *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive,* 1 Cor. xv. 22. All that die, shall by him be restored to life again: and all that go to him for it, shall by him be restored to eternal life and happiness. That is now wholly at his disposal, and he may give it to whomsoever he pleaseth; and he never fails to give it to those who go unto him for it, John vi. 37

But we being all by nature dead in trespasses and sins, there is a great deal to be done before we can be raised up to newness of life, so as to be meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Neither could it ever have been effected, but by the same power, which at first gave us our life and being. But our comfort is, he that was our Maker, is now our Saviour: and therefore we may be confident, that he is as able as he is willing to save and bring us to eternal life.

For which purpose therefore, he being now *exalted at the right hand of God, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins,* Acts v. 31. he is continually exerting his infinite power, and applying his all-sufficient merits for the salvation of those who come unto him: he first gives them repentance unto life, such repentance as hath life in the

Gospel promised to it: he by his Holy Spirit opens their eyes that they may see their sins, and possesseth their hearts with so quick a sense of them, that they are not only sorry for them, but likewise abhor and loath them: he, by his power, prevents their falling into temptation, or else by his grace raiseth them up again: he affords them all the means of salvation, and assists them in the use thereof: he puts them in mind of performing their duty to God, and makes them uneasy unless they do it: he enlightens their understandings: he directs their intentions: he purifies their hearts: he regulates and governs all their passions: he keeps their consciences always awake: he sanctifies them wholly in soul, body, and spirit, that they may be holy, as he who hath called them is holy, in all manner of conversation: his grace is always sufficient for them: his strength is made perfect in their weakness, and his power resteth continually upon them: so that, with St. Paul, *they can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth them*, Phil. iv. 13. And when he hath thus disposed and qualified them for it, he applies unto them the merits of his death, for the pardon of all their former sins, as well as present infirmities, and for their justification before God. He, by virtue of the sacrifice he offered upon earth, is always making atonement and reconciliation in heaven for them: he is their Mediator and Advocate with the Father, ever living to make intercession for them: by means whereof, they are always kept in the favour of God; their faults are all covered, their duties and good works, though imperfect, are all accepted; and they themselves, in him, are accounted righteous persons, and reckoned among the saints, which he will place, at the last day, on his right hand, and then will say unto them, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*, Matt. xxv. 34. And when others go into everlasting punishment, these shall go into life eternal, ver. 46.

Thus they who come to Christ, have life by him, eternal life and salvation. Neither is there salvation in any other : *for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby they must be saved*, Acts iv. 12.

But then we must observe, thirdly, that they who would have this life of Christ, must go unto him for it. *Ye will not come to me*, saith he, *that ye may have life* : implying, that none can have it, but they who come to him ; but that all who come to him shall certainly have it ; and the only reason why any have it not is, because they will not come unto him for it ; where, by coming to him, he means our believing in him, John vi. 35, 37 for it is to this that eternal life is promised in the Gospel, John iii. 15, 16. vi. 40, &c. Which is there expressed by our coming to him, because it is by faith that we go to him, as to the great Prophet of the world, and accordingly assent to all that he hath revealed to us. By faith we go to him as to our great Lord and Master, and accordingly obey and observe whatsoever he hath taught us : by faith also we go unto him as to our High-priest, now appearing in the presence of God, and there making intercession for us, that we may have eternal life, and accordingly trust and depend upon him for it, and for all things necessary in order to it : for grace to repent and turn to God : for power to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil : for his Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth, to strengthen our faith, and to direct and assist us in doing whatsoever he requireth of us, and in suffering whatsoever he shall see good to lay upon us, in order to our obtaining eternal life : and then we trust and depend upon him, to absolve us from all our sins, to justify us before God, to make up all differences between him and us ; and so to bring us, at last, to live with him and his holy angels in heaven.

Thus all that would have life, must go unto Christ for it, so as to believe and trust on him for all and

every thing that can any way contribute towards their having of it ; which that we may, we must be sure to walk continually in all the ways that lead towards him. We must keep our bodies under, by fasting and abstinence, *that we may run with patience the race that is set before us*, so as to hold out to the end : we must apply ourselves every day, by prayer to him, and to the Father in his name, for all things necessary, both for life and godliness : we must never leave off the assembling of ourselves together, but go as oft as possibly we can unto the public congregation of his people meeting together in his name, where he is always present, ready to receive us. We must hearken diligently to his holy word, that we may know what to believe, and likewise have grace to do it : *for faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*, Rom. x. 17 Above all, we must take all opportunities that we can get, of meeting with our Lord at his own table, to partake of his body and blood, as it is there offered, to strengthen and refresh our souls. For he himself saith, *Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. But whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath life eternal, and I will raise him up at the last day*, John vi. 53, 54.

These are the ways which Christ himself hath prescribed, whereby to go to him for life : and therefore, they that would go to him, must walk not only in some, but all these ways ; nor only now and then, but as constantly as ever they can. For it is by the constant exercise of ourselves in these holy duties, that our minds are inclined to God, and our faith confirmed in our blessed Saviour ; that faith whereby we go to him for life. And therefore, we must never leave them off, as long as we live, but still go on, till we receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls, or that eternal life, which all shall have that go to Christ, and none can have, but they who go unto him.

And yet how few are there in the world will do it ?

How few among themselves ? Christ himself, who knows the hearts of all men, saith, *Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life ; οὐ θέλετε, ye will not.* He lays the fault wholly upon your wills : though ye all desire life, and know that ye may have it, if ye would but come unto him ; yet ye will not. Though he himself calls you in his word, by his ministers, yea, and with his own mouth too, saying, *Come to me*, yet ye will not come : and all, because ye will not. So desperately wicked are the hearts of men become, so impetuously bent upon their own ruin and destruction. Though the eternal Son of God hath purchased life for them, with his own death, and calls upon them to come unto him, yet they will not come ; no, not for life itself. But as the people of old, when God called upon them to leave their strange gods, and turn to him, they answered roundly, *No ; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go*, Jer ii. 25. So it is at this day. Though the eternal God our Saviour calls upon you to leave doating upon this transient world, and come to him, that you may live and be happy for ever ; you answer in effect, *No ; we have loved the world, and after it we will go.* Let Christ himself call as often as he please, and promise nothing less than life itself to all that come unto him ; it is all one, ye will not come unto him, that ye might have life.

This, I confess, is a very melancholy and ungrateful subject. It would make a true Christian heart bleed, to see how people generally slight their only Saviour, and their salvation too ; and yet cannot endure to hear of it, but are ready to fly in the face of any that put them in mind of their folly and danger. But however, our blessed Lord and Saviour said it, on purpose that men might take notice of it. Howsoever they take it, we are bound in duty and conscience to repeat and explain it to them ; and therefore I shall briefly consider both the truth of this proposition, that men will not come to Christ, that they might have life ; and the reasons, such as they are, why they will not.

As for the first, we cannot doubt of the truth of what our Lord here saith, seeing he saith it, who is truth itself. For having his word for it, we have all the reason that can be to believe it, though the experience of all mankind should seem to contradict it. But alas ! that is so far from contradicting, that it too plainly verifies and confirms it : as might be easily demonstrated from the general practice of mankind, in all ages, since our Saviour's living upon earth to this day. But not to insist upon former ages, we have but too many instances of it in our own. There is scarce a nation upon earth but what hath heard more or less of Christ, as the Saviour of the world ; yet the far greatest part of them still continue Turks or Heathens, and are so far from coming to him, that they will not so much as profess that holy religion which he hath planted in the world, but rather do all they can to extirpate and destroy it : and of those who profess it, the far greatest part only profess it ; and that too, not because it is the religion of Christ, but only because it is the religion of the country where they were born and bred, and where they still live. And of those too, who do not only profess it, but seem to do some things that are required in it ; there are but few that do all, but content themselves with being of such a party or faction in it ; and with the outward performance of some few particular acts, whereby they may seem to be religious. This is the farthest that most of those go, who are called Christians : so true is that which our Lord said, *Many are called, but few are chosen*, Matt. xxii. 14. For of all who are thus called, there are but few that will come to him ; so very few, that they can scarce be reckoned any at all, in comparison of the many which are called.

I need not descend to particulars ; most of you who are here present know it to be true of yourselves : you are often called upon to repent and leave your sins, but ye will not do it : ye are called every day to the house of God, to perform your devotions to him, but ye will

not come : ye are called to partake of all the merits of Christ's death, but you will not partake of them : you are called out of darkness into the marvellous light of the Gospel, but ye will not walk in it : you are called to be saints, but ye will not be so : you are called to eternal life by Jesus Christ, but ye will not come to him for it. And so you yourselves make good this saying of our Saviour, *Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.*

But how comes this about ? What may be the reasons, why men will not come to Christ for life ? Doubtless there can be none why they should not ; yet howsoever, several may be assigned why they will not do it. In treating upon which, that I may not seem to aim at any particular persons, I shall speak only of men in general, and leave it to every one's conscience, to apply what is said to himself, and to consider which of them is his reason, wherefore he is in the number of those who will not come to Christ, that they might have life.

First therefore, one great reason is, because men are generally so stupid and brutish, that they care not for the life which Christ would give them ; and therefore will not come to him for it : for that hath respect to their future state, to their living hereafter in another world ; whereas they are only for this present life. They, like brute beasts, look no farther than what lies just before them. If they can but live in plenty and reputation among their neighbours ; or if they can but live at present, they matter not what will become of them hereafter : and therefore go on, eating, and drinking, and sleeping, and working, or playing away their time upon earth, till at length death comes, and carries them to a place they never thought of in all their lives. This God himself observed in his own people, saying, that they were a nation void of counsel, *neither is there any understanding in them ;* and then adds ; *O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end,* Deut. xxxii, 28, 29. But

that men will not do ; they will not consider how to live hereafter ; and then it is no wonder that *they will not come to Christ, that they might have life.*

And if they cannot, with all their art, keep their consciences always quiet, but they will sometimes be disturbing them with the thoughts of their future state ; yet howsoever, they can make a shift to flatter themselves with the hopes, that they shall do well enough, without troubling themselves about going to Christ for help : for they are careful, and sober, and diligent in their callings ; they live peaceably with their neighbours ; they pay every one their own ; they are not conscious to themselves of any gross sin, nor sensible of any guilt that lies upon them ; and therefore cannot see any great necessity of going to another for pardon and salvation. This is another great reason why there are so few that do it : for Christ calls those only who are weary and heavy laden with their sins to come to him, none else being qualified or disposed for it, Matt. xi. 28. And therefore it is no wonder, that such as these, who are no way concerned about their sins, will not go to him for life.

And of those who have some sense of their sins, many having a greater opinion of the good works which they imagine themselves to have done, they doubt not but their good works will overbalance their sins, and justify them before God, without being beholden to the righteousness of another for it. This was the case of the Jews in the apostles' days, and it is the case of many who are called Christians now, who being *ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God*, Rom. x. 3. and therefore will not go to Christ for it, by whom alone it is possible to be had.

But there are others, though I hope not so many, who are not rightly instructed in the knowledge of Christ, or else are poisoned with those heretical opinions

which the devil, by his agents, hath endeavoured to spread among us, denying the divinity of our blessed Saviour, and the satisfaction which he hath made for the sins of the world; and so overturning, as much as in them lies, the very foundation of the Christian religion, and all our hopes of salvation in it. Such people will never go to Christ for life, because they do not think they can have it by him.

But though all the power of hell hath been engaged to propagate these damnable heresies among us, yet God of his infinite mercy hath prevented their taking much root among us; few having been infected with them, nor any who seriously mind their eternal salvation: but still people generally live in the true faith of Christ, so far, at least, as to believe him to be the only Saviour of the world, and that eternal life may be had by him. But yet, notwithstanding, they will not come unto him for it, because they will not understand what it is to do so: if they do but make an outward profession of the Christian religion, and do some things required in it; if they say their prayers at home every day, and come to church to do it, when they have nothing else to do; if they do not work at their trades upon the Lord's-day, nor suffer any in their family to do so; if they read a chapter in the Bible now and then, and hear a great many sermons, especially if they come to the sacrament two or three times a year, as the laws of the land require; if they do but this, they think they do a great deal: and, I confess, with grief and shame, it is a great deal more than most among us do. But alas! they may do all this in their customary and superficial manner, and yet be as far from coming to Christ, as if they had never heard of him. But howsoever, thinking this to be sufficient, they will go no farther, and therefore will never come to him that they might have life.

But one of the greatest reasons of all, why men will not come to Christ for life, no, not for eternal life, is,

because they have other things to mind, which they wisely think to be of greater moment: they have the cares of this life upon their hands, and in their hearts too; which they are so full of, that there is no room left for the thoughts of another life to enter. This our Lord himself takes especial notice of, as the chief cause why men will not come unto him; and hath therefore represented it to us, in the parable of the great supper, which a certain man made, and bade many to it: but when he sent his servants to call them, they all, with one consent, began to make excuse; the first said, *I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it; I pray thee have me excused.* Another said, *I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused.* And another said, *I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come,* Luke xiv. 18, 19, 20. This always was, still is, and I fear ever will be, the common practice of the world. Though men be invited to the greatest feast that can be made out of all the joys and pleasures that heaven can afford, they all slight it upon one frivolous pretence or other; but their excuses are most generally taken from the little trifles of this life. One man hath his shop or warehouse to mind; another his barns or stables; a third his sheep or oxen, or something he hath got in the field. This man hath a wife to marry, and therefore he will not, another hath married one already, and therefore he cannot, come. Some are wholly taken up with studying arts and languages; some with prying into the secrets of nature, and guessing at the causes of them; and some again, with contriving how to advance their fortunes, and seem great in the eye of the world. These have their ambition, those their covetousness, a third sort have their revenge, a fourth their luxury, to indulge and gratify.

And whilst men's minds are thus set upon, or running after, the things of this life, they cannot come to Christ for life, or rather will not. For after all that can

be said, the greatest reason of all why they will not, and that into which all the other reasons resolve themselves at last, is this ; they will not, because they will not : if there was but a willing mind, nothing could hinder them ; but that being wanting, every thing that lies in the way doth it.

Now I appeal to all here present, whether these can be reckoned to be wise men, and really to mind their own good ? I dare say, you cannot think so ; and therefore hope you will not be in the number of them, but take care, that although these words are true of other people, they shall not be so of you : that Christ may not say of you, *Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.* For that you are all fully resolved to come to him, and will accordingly do it ; that ye will deny yourselves, take up your cross, and follow him ; that ye will take his yoke upon you, and become his disciples indeed, so as to believe and do all that he hath taught you : and that ye will now live with a constant trust and dependence upon him for pardon and grace, and all things necessary to your obtaining eternal life.

I hope many of you have thus resolved already, and heartily wish ye would all do so, with full purpose of heart. For remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said with his own mouth, *What is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?* Matt. xvi. 26. And how he said by his prophet, *As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked may turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die ?* Ezek. xxxiii. 11 Why will ye die ? why will ye ruin and destroy yourselves, when ye need not ? I know ye all desire life, and ye may all have it if ye will. Christ hath purchased it for all ; he hath given it to many already ; and he is ready to give it to you, if ye will but come unto him for it. And he hath sent me, at this time, to call upon you all

to come to him. Come to him therefore, without any more ado, that your souls may live ; that he may wash you from your sins in his own blood ; that he may sanctify and cleanse you by his Holy Spirit ; that he may present you holy, and without blemish, to God and the Father ; that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then ye also may appear with him in glory, and live eternally with him, who liveth with the Father and Holy Ghost, one God blessed for ever.

SERMON XXXVII.

ABIDING IN CHRIST, THE ONLY MEANS OF UNIVERSAL
HAPPINESS.

JOHN xv. 7

*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall
ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*

THERE are two general heads of mankind ; the first Adam, and the second, that is, Jesus Christ ; who also was, in the most proper sense of the word, *Adam*, man in general ; in that the whole nature of man was in him, as it was in the first Adam. And so the apostle calls him, where, speaking of Adam and Christ, he saith, *And so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening Spirit*, 1 Cor. xv. 45. The last Adam, Christ, was made a Spirit that maketh or causeth life, as the first was the cause of death : *for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive*, ver. 22. In the first all died, the second died for all, so that all may live again in him ; and so they all will at the last day. And all that will, may be quickened by him with newness of life, and restored to the same happy state from which they fell in the first Adam. And so many will, according to that of the apostle, *As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous*, Rom. v. 19.

This may seem a great mystery, that they who fell in one man, should rise again in another. But the apostle unfolds it, where he saith, *The first man is of the earth*,

earthly ; the second man is the Lord from heaven, 1 Cor. xv. 47 The first man in general, in whom all the rest were contained, and therefore fell with him, and in him ; he was formed out of the dust of the ground, and so was a mere man, and no more. But the second man came down from heaven, and was the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the Almighty God there, before he came from thence, yea, from all eternity. He was the Lord from heaven, and came from thence in a way suitable to his own divine glory, by being conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of a pure virgin, so as to become man, and yet be God too in the same person. And being thus God as well as man, he was every way qualified to repair the loss that mankind sustained by the fall of the first Adam, and to restore them to their first estate, as perfectly as if they had never fallen from it.

And that we may not doubt, but that he is as willing as he is able to do it for us ; he himself hath here promised, in effect, that he will, if we do what he requires on our part, saying, *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.* For to have what we will, is to be as happy as it is possible for creatures to be ; as happy as the first man was in the state of innocency, and as we should have been, if he had continued in it. For he that hath whatsoever he desires, or would have, his desires must needs be satisfied, and his soul at rest ; and, by consequence, be completely happy ; all our happiness consisting in the full satisfaction of our souls, in the enjoyment of all that we desire. And therefore he, the second man, the Lord from heaven, having here told us, that we shall ask whatsoever we will or desire, and it shall be done unto us, upon the terms here propounded, it is the same in effect as if he had said, that he will restore us again to the same state of happiness, from which the first man, by transgression, fell, and we in him.

But to our right understanding the true meaning and extent of this divine promise, it will be necessary to consider, first, the conditions upon which it is made,

which are only two: first, that we abide in him; and then, that his words abide in us.

First, saith he, *if ye abide in me*. He doth not say, if ye be in me, but, *if ye abide in me*. For, speaking to his disciples, he supposeth them to be in him, upon that account, because they were his disciples. And he speaks to such only: for none can abide in him, unless they first be in him; that is, unless they be taken out of the stock of the first Adam, and grafted into him the second. Thus he himself explains it in this place, by comparing himself to a vine, and his disciples to the branches in that vine: *I*, saith he, *am the vine, ye are the branches*, ver. 5. implying, that his disciples are in him, as a branch is in the vine, so as to receive sap and nourishment from it. The same thing is elsewhere explained, by their being members of his body the church: for the church, or congregation, of his faithful people, is called his *body*, Eph. i. 23. Of this body, he himself is the *head*, Col. i. 18. And his disciples are all, and every one in his place and station, *members of this body*, Eph. v. 30. and so are acted and governed by that Holy Spirit that proceeded from him the head; which could not be, unless they were in him as a branch is in the vine, or a member in the body of a man.

But how can we, who are by nature of the stock of the first Adam, be taken out from thence, and made the members of the second, or, which is the same, his disciples? This he himself hath taken care of, by ordaining a sacrament for this end and purpose, saying to his apostles, and in them to all the ministers of his church, *Go ye therefore, and make all nations disciples, by baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*; as the original words plainly import, Matt. xxviii. 19. Hence they who are baptized according to this form, instituted by Christ himself for that purpose, are said to be baptized into him, Rom. vi. 3. And the apostle saith, *As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ*, Gal. iii. 27. But they who are baptized into Christ must needs

be in him : and they who are in him, have laid aside their relation to Adam, and have put on Christ, so as to belong now to him, as his flock, his disciples, his peculiar people.

But it is not enough thus to be in Christ, but we must abide in him ; *If ye abide in me*, saith he ; implying that some may be in him, and yet not abide in him. Such are they who were once baptized, and so made members of his body, but are afterwards cut off by his church, or by themselves : such as renounce their baptism, or leave off to profess his doctrine and religion, and such as only profess it, but do not take care to believe, and live according to it : such although they were once in him, yet they do not abide in him ; and howsoever they may seem to be his disciples, really they are not, as he himself hath taught us, where he saith to the Jews that believed in him, *If ye continue in my words, then are ye my disciples indeed*, John viii. 31. intimating, that although they believed in him at present, yet unless they continued to do so, they were not his disciples indeed, though they might be so in name and shew : and therefore, in order to his restoring us to a state of happiness, he requires not only that we be in him, but that we continue or abide in him.

And as we must abide in him, so his words must abide in us : *If ye abide*, saith he, *in me, and my words abide in you*. Where it will be necessary to consider, what we are here to understand by his words, how they are to abide in us, and what effect or influence they will have upon us, if they do so.

As for the first, the whole Scripture, in a large sense, may be called his words ; in that it was all given by his inspiration. For he, the second man, having undertaken the restoration of mankind, immediately upon the fall of the first, he all along took care to make known the will of God unto them, by his servants the prophets, which were sent by him, and spoke in his name, as they were inspired, moved, and directed by his Spirit that was in them, 1 Pet. i. 11. Neither did he only

speaking by them, but in them ; so that what they said, were his words in their mouths, but uttered often as from his own. As where he saith, *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell : they parted my garments among them : the Spirit of the Lord was upon me* : these, and many such expressions, in the Old Testament, were as plainly the words of Christ, as any that are recorded in the New.

But by his words, in my text, he seems to mean, in a more especial manner, those which he spake, when he was upon earth. For when he had actually taken our nature upon him, he appeared among men as one of them, as he really was, and conversed familiarly with them, as they used to do with one another. But he being God as well as man, every word he spake was the word of God. The very officers that were once sent to take him could not but confess, *that never man spake like this man*, John vii. 46. Though he spake as man, yet every thing he said was uttered with that divine authority and power, that people could not but take notice of it, and perceive there was something more than ordinary in it ; insomuch, that they were astonished at him ; *for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the Scribes*, Mark i. 22. *And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth*, Luke iv. 22. For whatsoever he spake, he spake it as the Son of God, sent by the Father on purpose to speak it : *My doctrine*, saith he, *is not mine, but his that sent me*, John vii. 16. *For I have spoken nothing of myself, but the Father that sent me, he gave me commandment what I should say, and what I should speak : and I know that his commandment is life everlasting. Whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak*, chap. xii. 49, 50. And therefore, all his words were truly and properly the oracles of God, given out from God the Father, by God the Son, such as never any words were but his. But such were all

his, and ought therefore to be received as such by all that heard them, or shall ever hear of them.

Especially considering, that as the only end of his coming into the world was to save mankind, so all he said, as well as what he did or suffered here, was for the same end. And it was for that end also, that he caused so many of his divine sayings to be recorded by persons assisted and directed by his own infallible Spirit in it, that all future ages might certainly know, though not all he said, yet as much as was necessary for their instruction and direction in the way to heaven: for which purpose also, he often spake in parables, delivering his doctrine under such schemes of speech, as were most plain and obvious to the vulgar; that what he said might be better understood by them, and make deeper impressions upon those who heard it. And every thing he said was expressed in as easy and familiar terms as such divine matter was capable of, that all might apprehend his meaning, and be edified by it. Neither is there any thing necessary for people to know, in order to their obtaining salvation, by him, but he, upon one occasion, and one way or other, puts them in mind of it. So that whatsoever he hath not made known to us, we may be confident; that it is not necessary for us to know it.

And as his words were all of infinite weight and moment, so they also which are left upon record are very many; so many, that it would be endless to recount and weigh them all, and every one particularly as they deserve. It is our unspeakable happiness, that we have them all translated into our own language, and may read them when we will, in his holy Gospel. And therefore we need not descend to particulars; only we may observe in general, that he hath revealed many great truths, necessary for all men to know, or made them clearer than they were before. He hath given us a full and perfect interpretation of the moral law, and the several branches of it; and hath added some other

precepts of great use and advantage to mankind. He hath fully made known unto us the severe punishments that shall be inflicted upon those who continue in sin, or the transgression of his said laws, and the rewards that shall be given to such as repent and believe the Gospel. He foretold also many things to come, particularly that all men shall rise again at the last day, and shall then give an account to him of all their actions, and that the wicked shall then go into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal. These are the great things to which all his words and discourses tended; which therefore, as he himself here expresseth it, *should abide in us*.

Secondly, What he means by that expression, is the next thing to be considered; and it had need be considered very seriously, seeing so great weight is here laid upon it: and therefore to set it in as clear a light as I can, we must first observe, that in order to our having his words abiding in us, it is necessary that we know them, and that we know them to be his words, that he said such and such things. We must not read his Gospel like other books, much less prefer the reading of other books before it; but look upon it as really it is the best book in the world: and accordingly read it with the utmost care and attention that our minds are capable of; taking particular notice of every thing that our Saviour said, and considering who it was that said it; not our fellow-creature, not a mere man, or an angel, or an archangel, but the eternal God our Saviour: it was God that said it, and therefore be sure it is true; it was God our Saviour that said it, and therefore be sure it is necessary for us to know it, otherwise he would never have told us of it.

But it is not enough thus to know that he spake such words, but we must strive to understand the meaning of them, of every one of them: for he never spake any one idle or impertinent word, but every word that came out of his divine mouth had its weight and emphasis;

so that the sense would have been imperfect without it. And one great reason, why people so often mistake his meaning, is, because they take his sayings as it were by the lump, without considering the several words which he used whereby to express it: for if they did that, they would find that one word gives such light unto another, that the whole is plain and easy. Wherefore, as ever ye desire to have the words of Christ abiding in you, ye must take all opportunities that ye can get of reading, or hearing them read to you; and apply your minds all along to every one of them, that ye may rightly apprehend, and be fully possessed with the sense and meaning of them. Ye must not read or hear them, as people are apt to do, so carelessly and cursorily, as if there was no great matter in them; but ye must attend to them with the same care and diligence, as if you heard them at the same time uttered by a voice from heaven, or published as the law was upon mount Sinai, with thundering and lightning. For every word that came out of our Saviour's mouth, was spoken by the same God that gave the law, as well as preached the Gospel, and therefore should be received with reverence and godly fear; and likewise with that love and affection that is due to the best friend we have in the world, and to every thing that he said; who said nothing but what some way or other tended to our good, and so was an expression of his love and kindness to us. For which reason also, we ought to value and prize his words, above all that were ever spoken; and rejoice and be glad of every opportunity that we can get of having them repeated to us: esteeming, as David did, the judgments of the Lord, that they are *more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb*, Psal. xix. 10. When we have attained thus far, even so as to know, understand, reverence, live, and rejoice in the words of Christ; then, and not till then, we shall be rightly disposed to have them abiding in us.

But that which is chiefly required towards it is to believe them ; not only so, as to own and acknowledge them to be true in general, but so as to be fully persuaded in our minds of the truth and certainty of them, as we can be of any thing we see, or hear, or converse with every day ; not doubting in the least of any thing that our Lord said, but taking his word for it, therefore only believing it, because he said it ; and said it therefore, that we might believe it upon his word, without troubling our heads about the reason or modus of it, how such a thing can be, as he saith it is. It is sufficient for us, that he who cannot lie hath said it : and therefore it cannot but be true, whether we are able to comprehend it or no : for he often speaks of things as much above our comprehension, as the heavens are above the earth, and infinitely more : for many of his words are concerning that infinite Being, which made and governs the whole world, which our finite understandings are in no capacity of reaching, no more than as if we had no understanding at all. And therefore, although he requires us to read, and know what he said, and to lay it up in our hearts as he said it ; yet he never requires us to understand or comprehend it, but only to believe it. This was the first thing he taught, so soon as he shewed himself to the world, saying, *Repent, and believe the Gospel*, Mark i. 15. The Gospel contains the sum and substance of all he said. This he commands all men to believe, and that too, upon pain of eternal damnation : *He that believeth, saith he, and is baptized, shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned*, Mark xvi. 16.

And it is no wonder that so great weight is laid upon our believing the words of Christ, recorded in his Gospel, that we shall be saved or damned, according as we do or do not believe them ; for they who do not believe what he said, make him a liar ; which is such an affront and dishonour to him, that no punishment can be too great for it, not hell-fire itself ; which is there-

fore called the portion of unbelievers, Luke xii. 46. It is allotted for them, for all of them, upon that very account, because they are unbelievers, because they would not believe in him, and his words, who alone can save them from it; but saves none but such as believe.

All others receive no benefit at all from what he did, nor from what he suffered for mankind, nor yet from any thing he said: *the word he preached doth not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who hear it*, Heb. iv. 2. Yet this was the case of many of the Jews, to whom he therefore said, *Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not*, John viii. 45. And so it is of many at this time, because he hath told them many great truths which they could never have thought of, unless he had revealed them, nor can comprehend now he hath revealed them; therefore they believe him not. But woe be to all such infidels! they are condemned already, because they believe not in the name of the only-begotten Son of God, nor the words that he hath said unto them, John iii. 18. For they are so far from having his words abiding in them, that they reject what he said, and cast it from them; and therefore can expect no other, but that he should reject them, and cast them into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; *where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*, as he himself hath told them, Mark ix. 44. And they will one day find his words to be true, although they would not believe him: *for heaven and earth shall pass away, but his words shall not pass away*, Matt. xxiv. 35. No, not any one of them: as every thing he said is most certainly true, so every thing that he hath foretold shall most certainly come to pass, whether men believe it or no.

From hence we may easily see, how much it concerns you all to live with a firm belief of all that Christ hath said, *that he may dwell in your hearts by faith*, Eph. iii. 17 and so his words may abide in you, which without faith they never can.

Supposing therefore that ye thus know and believe the words of Christ, if ye would have them always abiding in you, ye must be always thinking of them, or at least calling them to mind as oft as ye have occasion, as ye often have, if not continually. Thus he himself, in this very chapter, said to his disciples, *Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord*, ver. 20. And his apostles told the bishops of Asia, that they ought to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, *It is more blessed to give than to receive*, Acts xx. 35. And thus you ought to remember his words whensoever any thing occurs to which they may be applied ; as they may be to every thing that happens, that is of any moment, through the whole course of a man's life. As for example : Are ye tempted by the devil, or his agents, to deny or doubt of his divine glory and power ? Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, *I and the Father are one*, John x. 30. Are ye tempted to idolatry, to give religious worship or service to a creature ? Remember how he said, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*, Matt. iv. 10. Are ye apt to be too careful and anxious about the things of this life ? Remember how he said, *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you*, Matt. vi. 33. Do ye pray to God for any thing ye want that is good for you ? Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, *Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you*, John xvi. 23. Do ye meet together in God's house, to perform your public devotions to him ? Remember how he said, *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*, Matt. xviii. 20. Are ye touched with so quick a sense of your sins, that ye are ready to despair of mercy ? Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, saying to you, *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*, Matt. xi. 28. *And him that*

cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out, John vi. 37. Are your hearts overwhelmed with grief and trouble for any thing that befalls you? Remember those words of the Lord Jesus, *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me*, John xiv. 1.

Thus there is nothing can fall out, but our Lord hath said something so pertinent to it, as if it was designed for that very purpose: and ye ought accordingly thus to remember his words upon all occasions; as ye cannot choose but do, if they abide in you. Whatsoever happens, some or other of them will come into your minds, either for your direction or comfort. And if ye thus accustom yourselves to call his words to mind, you will take the ready course to keep them there, so that they may abide in you.

And so they must do, not only for some time, but all your life long: if they ever cease to be in you, how long soever they were there before, they cannot be said to abide in you, as our Saviour here requires they should: for that supposeth they always abide in you; that ye be not like those he speaks of in the parable of the sower, *which when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away*, Luke viii. 13. But that his words be rooted and grounded in you, that you may abide in them, and they in you, notwithstanding all the temptations and devices of the devil to get them out; otherwise they will stand you in no stead, nor ever bring forth fruit unto perfection: for the promise is not made to those who only receive the word, but to those who keep it, and who keep it to the end. Thus he himself explains what he means by his words abiding in us, where he saith, *He that overcometh, and keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give power over the nation*, Rev. ii. 26. *And he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved*, Mark xiii. 13. Which being also his words, as well as any other, they likewise ought

to abide in us, that all the others may do so, and so have their due effect upon us.

What that is, is the last thing to be considered about Christ's words abiding in us, even what effect they have upon those in whom they abide. This, I know, is a thing very difficult to be explained ; at least so, as that any should apprehend it, but they who have and feel it. Howsoever, I shall offer at something towards it from the words of Christ himself, which are the best interpreters of one another. He therefore, in this very place, where he speaks of our abiding in him, and his words abiding in us, saith to his disciples, *Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken to you*, ver. 3. And in the prayer he made to his Father for them, he saith, *Sanctify them through thy truth ; thy word is truth*, John xvii. 17 whereby he hath taught us, that his words, which are truth itself, sanctify and cleanse them in whom they abide, or make them clean and holy ; and so certainly they do in a wonderful and divine manner. For whereas, by our fall in the first Adam, and our own manifold transgressions of God's law consequent upon it, our nature is depraved, and our minds darkened and defiled, so as that we cannot discern aright between truth and error, nor, by consequence, betwixt good and evil ; but are liable to perpetual mistakes, and can never be certain that we are in the right : by the words of Christ abiding in us, our minds are enlightened, our judgments rightly informed, our consciences purged, and our whole souls purified and cleansed from the filth which they had contracted ; and therefore can clearly apprehend the truth, and follow it, as well as see all sorts of error and vice, so as to avoid and shun them : for the words of Christ being truth itself, where they abide, there truth abides ; and therefore our blessed Saviour promised his disciples, that his Holy Spirit should *bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever he had said unto them*, John xiv. 26. And then, that he should *guide them into all truth*,

chap. xvi. 13. Which was the same thing in other words, which he seems to have used, on purpose to teach us, that we are led into all truth by remembering his words, and having them always abiding in us, and so cleansing us from our former ignorance and errors : and therefore St. Peter also saith, that God purifies our hearts by faith, Acts xv. 11. even by faith, in the words of truth abiding and reigning in us.

And again, whereas by our sins we have contracted not only filth, but so much guilt upon ourselves, that we can see no ground to hope for mercy at the hands of God ; and therefore, no reason why we should take care and strive to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God ; seeing, when we have done all we can, we can never merit his favour, nor expect that he should be reconciled to us ; by the words of Christ abiding in us, we have firm ground whereupon to build our hopes of God's mercy and favour to us ; for he hath said, that he came to *save the world*, John xii. 47 that he *came to give his life a ransom for many*, Matt. xx. 28. *that his blood is the blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins*, chap. xxvi. 23. *that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*, John iii. 16. and that he went to heaven to *prepare a place for us*, chap. xiv. 2. Now by these and such like words of *Christ abiding in us*, we clearly see, that he is *the propitiation for our sins, and for the sins of the whole world* ; and therefore, that for his sake Almighty God will have mercy upon us, forgive us our sins, and receive us again into his grace and favour, upon our faith in him, so as to bring us at last to everlasting life. And that he went to heaven for that end and purpose, that when we leave this world, we also may go thither, and live with him for ever. Now who can believe all this, and have it always in his mind, and not strive all he can to be holy, as he who hath thus called him is holy in all manner of con-

versation ? St. John lays it down as a general and undoubted truth, *Every one that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure*, 1 John iii. 3. And every one may well do so, seeing all that have the words of Christ, and therefore this hope in them, they have Christ himself in them ; his grace is sufficient for them, his strength is made perfect in their weakness, his power rests upon them ; so that although they can do nothing of themselves, they can do all things through Christ that strengthens them, by his Spirit and words abiding in them.

And hence it comes to pass, that where the words of Christ abide, there all manner of virtue and good works spring up and flourish ; as he himself also hath told us, in the verse but one before my text, saying, *I am the vine, ye are the branches ; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit*. Whereby he hath given us to understand, that as a branch that hath the sap and juice of the vine in it will certainly bring forth grapes ; so every one that hath him, and his words abiding in him, will as certainly bring forth much fruit, even all such good works as are required to his obtaining eternal life, through him whose words they are, *the author and finisher of our faith*.

Nothing now remains to be explained in these words, but the promise which is here made ; that if ye abide in Christ, and his words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you : which promise being made by Christ himself, we cannot doubt of the performance of it ; for it cannot but be performed, when the conditions upon which it is made are so. For if ye abide in him, and his words in you, your hearts, as we have shewn, will be so cleansed and purified, that ye can will nothing but what God wills, and therefore ask nothing but according to his will, which is always performed. And as his beloved disciple observes, *This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us*, 1 John v. 14. And as such always will only what God would

have them, so having Christ's words always abiding in them, they ask what they would have only in the way wherein he would have them ask it, according to those words of his, *If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it*, John xiv. 14. Having therefore his word for it, and asking accordingly in his name, they can never fail of having any thing they would that is good for them ; and if it be not so, they would not have it.

Seeing therefore, that they who abide in Christ, and have his words abiding in them, may thus ask whatsoever they will, and it shall be done unto them ; it follows in course, that they are as happy as the first Adam was in his first estate : for they are as happy as they wish to be in this world, and shall be eternally happy in the next, through the last Adam, even Jesus Christ our Saviour and our Lord ; who, of God, is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption : every thing that is necessary to the sanctifying and saving of our souls.

Wherefore, in his name, I beseech you to take all the care you can to lay up his words in your hearts, and to keep them there, that they may abide in you ; or at least the sense and doctrine contained in them, that ye may have recourse to it, upon all occasions, to keep you stedfast in his faith, and obedient to his laws. I know there are but few that mind these things, or ever think of them ; but I would have you in the number of the few that take care of their souls, and love and honour him, who alone can save them ; so as to abide in him, and to have his words abiding in you. You have now heard of what mighty advantage this will be unto you ; but your hearing it will signify nothing, unless you do it : and therefore, in short, as ever ye desire that he should be your Friend and Advocate with the Father, deliver you from his wrath, and restore you to his favour, and receive you at last into his heavenly kingdom, remember the words of the Lord Jesus ; and particularly how he said, *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*

SERMON XXXVIII.

BEARING MUCH FRUIT, THE CHARACTERISTIC OF
CHRIST'S DISCIPLES.

JOHN xv. 8.

*Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit ;
so shall ye be my disciples.*

OF all the religions professed upon the face of the earth, there is none wherein men worship the true God aright, but only the Christian ; neither is there salvation in any other ; *for there is no name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, but the name of Christ*, Acts iv. 12. And therefore it must be acknowledged to be a great blessing, to be born and bred where this, the only true religion, is publicly and generally professed. But we must take heed, that we do not take up with the bare profession, and so lose all the benefit of it, as many have done before us. When it was first planted by Christ, and propagated by his apostles, it throve to admiration, although for near three hundred years together it was no where received as the religion of the country, nor had any civil magistrates or laws made for it, but all against it : yet nevertheless, it then spread itself, increased, and flourished, and brought forth fruit abundantly, to the glory of God, and the benefit of mankind. They who then professed it, really were what they appeared to be, and appeared to be as they were, far better than all other sorts of people besides ; more pious toward God, and zealous for his ho-

nour ; more meek and humble in their own eyes ; more sober, and modest, and just, and kind, and charitable towards others ; every way eminent in virtue and good works. But when it was publicly received into the Roman empire, and so by degrees became the religion of whole nations, then it began sensibly to decay ; for men generally took it up, as they do their habits, only because it was in fashion ; and professed themselves to be Christians, for no other reason, than that which made them heathens before, even because it was the religion of their country. Not but that there was still many who embraced it upon choice, and in good earnest ; yea, doubtless, many more than there were before : but these were so few, in comparison of those multitudes that came into it, upon other accounts, that they could scarce be seen in the crowd ; the far greatest part of those who professed it having no other design, but only to profess it as their prince and fellow-subjects did, without ever troubling their heads about believing, and acting according to the principles and rules prescribed in it.

And so it is to this day : we have infinite cause to bless God that the Christian is the only religion generally professed in the kingdom, that it is established by our laws, that we, in our very infancy, were admitted by baptism into it, and that we still continue to profess ourselves to be Christians, or the disciples of the ever-blessed Jesus Christ. But how great a blessing soever this may be in itself, it will not be so to us, unless we make a right use of it, by living up to what we profess ; as, God knows, very few among us do : for being fully persuaded, as we ought, that we are of that religion wherein men may be saved, we take it for granted, that we shall be so, without taking any farther care about it ; and therefore go on in the outward profession of our religion, or else run, perhaps, into parties and factions, spending our zeal in hot disputes about the circumstances of it, till we have none left for "the main sub-

stantial duties required in it ; and, by consequence, never so much as aim at, much less come to the end wherefore Jesus Christ revealed this religion to us, even that we may truly serve, honour, and glorify the almighty Creator of the world, by doing the works, which he for that purpose hath set us ; and so living, as becometh those who are his disciples in deed, as well as by profession.

This the great Founder of our holy religion foresaw, when he first laid the foundation of it upon earth ; and therefore often forewarned us of it, particularly in the words which I have now read ; wherein he, for that purpose, teacheth us these three lessons : 1 That they who profess themselves his disciples, *should bear much fruit*. 2. That it is by this that God is glorified : *Herein*, saith he, *is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit*. 3. That they, and they only, who thus bear much fruit, so as to glorify God, are truly his disciples : *So*, saith he, *ye shall be my disciples*. All which I shall endeavour, by his assistance, to explain so as that you may all learn how much it concerns you all to practise, as well as to profess, that holy religion which he our Lord and Master hath taught us.

First, therefore, in that our Lord here saith, *that it is by bearing much fruit that we glorify his Father, and become his disciples* ; he plainly declares it to be his will, and, by consequence, the duty of all who profess themselves to be his disciples, *to bear much fruit*.

But that we may understand his meaning aright, we must first consider what is here meant by *bearing much fruit* ; and then, why his disciples should all do so. As for the first, we must observe, that our Master is here teaching us, that all the power we have of doing good, comes immediately from him. And that we may the better apprehend it, he compares himself to a vine, his Father to an husbandman, that taketh care of that vine ; and those who are baptized into and profess his religion, he compares to so many branches grafted into it : to

whom he therefore saith, *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing*, ver. 4, 5. Where by *bringing forth much fruit*, it is plain that he means the doing much good, the performing many such works as are proper for his disciples, as such, to do, by that power and Spirit which they receive from him; as a vine-branch brings forth grapes, suitable and proportionable to the juice and nourishment that is conveyed into it from the stock. And seeing he useth the same metaphor in my text, it must there also be understood in the same sense. Wherefore, by *bearing fruit*, he means the doing such works, as, for the quality of them, are agreeable to the profession of his religion: and by *bearing much fruit*, he means the doing of so many such works, as, for the quantity also, may exceed those which are done by men of other professions.

First, therefore, as to the quality, they are such works as Christ our Lord and Master hath set us, which he himself calls *good works*, Matt. v. 16. His forerunner, *fruits meet for repentance*, Matt. iii. 8. His apostle calls them, *the fruits of righteousness*, 2 Cor. ix. 10. Phil. i. 11. Such as are conformable to those eternal rules of justice and equity, which he hath revealed to us in his Gospel, and enables his faithful people to perform by that Holy Spirit which he gives them for that end and purpose, which being the root and principle from which they flow, they are therefore called also, *the fruit of the Spirit*. And that we may not be ignorant of what they are, the apostle hath reckoned them up particularly, and given us a catalogue of them, saying, *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance*, Gal. v. 22, 23. To which all sorts of good works, whether they have respect to God, to ourselves, or to

other men, may be referred : and which the same apostle elsewhere reduceth to these three heads, saying, *That the grace of God appearing in the Gospel, teacheth us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world,* Tit. ii. 12. These therefore are the works which Christ our Master teacheth all his disciples or scholars to do. This is that fruit which he would have all to bear, that are grafted into, and so made the branches of him the true vine.

But they must not only bear this kind of fruit, but much of it. They must excel in the quantity as well as in the quality of what they do. Other people may do some things, but they must do all that is required of them, so as to abound in all manner of virtue and good works ; according to that of the apostle to the disciples at Corinth, *Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,* 1 Cor. xv. 58. And, *As ye abound in every thing, in faith, in utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us ; see that ye abound in this grace also, even in the grace of charity, or liberality to the poor,* 2 Cor. viii. 7. He would have them want nothing ; no grace or virtue whatsoever that a Christian ought to have. To the same purpose is that of St. Peter, who, writing to all Christians, saith, *And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity,* 2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7. And then he adds, *For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye neither be barren, nor unfruitful, in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ,* ver. 8. From whence we may observe, that they who have not these, all these virtues, and abound in them too, they are barren and unfruitful, so far from *bearing much fruit*, that they bear none at all ; for there is that concatenation and dependence of

one Christian virtue upon another, that they can never be parted, but all go together ; he that hath not all, hath none ; and he that doth not all he ought, doth nothing as he ought to do it : and therefore he that would do any good at all, must be sure to do all he can ; otherwise he can never be said to *bear much fruit*, as all Christians are obliged to do, as ever they desire to live as becometh Christians. This is that which St. Paul means, where he prays, that the Colossians *might walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work*, Col. i. 10. implying, that it is by our being fruitful, not only in some, but in every good work, that we walk worthy of so great a Lord, as our Lord is, and suitably to our profession of his holy Gospel.

And certainly the disciples of Jesus Christ, or, as they were called first at Antioch, Acts xi. 26. Christians, they of all men ought to *bear much fruit*, or do much good more than other people : for though all men have many obligations upon them to do so, they have more. They solemnly promised, when they were made disciples, that they would keep all God's commandments ; and therefore unless they do so, they break their own promise, as well as his commands ; they name the name of Christ, and therefore should *depart from all iniquity*, 2 Tim. ii. 19. They are called out of darkness into his marvellous light, and therefore should walk as the children of light, and shine as lights in the world : *they ought to be holy, as he who hath called them is holy, in all manner of conversation*, 1 Pet. i. 15. They know their duty better than other people, and therefore are bound to do it better : for they being the scholars or disciples of Jesus Christ, have the best Master in the world to instruct them, and therefore must needs know all that is necessary for them to do, far better than other people can, who have none but blind guides to lead them.

But some, perhaps, may say, it is true, they who were Christ's disciples when he was upon earth, and conversed

with him every day, they might well understand his mind, and know every thing he would have them do ; but we never saw him in our lives, nor heard him speak, nor ever expect to see or hear him as long as we live : how then can we be taught by him ? To that I answer, that although we cannot hear, yet we can see, and read the words he spake to them, and the several lessons which he taught his first disciples ; and so may in all respects learn our duty as well as they, and in some sense better : for he spake many things to them only once, which they might not presently apprehend, or might soon forget, so as not to be able ever to recover them without a miracle ; even by his Holy Spirit bringing them to their remembrance. But we have his very words, all which he ever said that was necessary for us to know, we have them all infallibly recorded by his said Holy Spirit ; so that we can read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them ; we can observe and consider them over and over again, lay them up in our hearts, and fix them upon our minds and consciences, so as to have them *always abiding in us*, as he himself also requires, John xv. 7 And if we do that, as all his disciples ought, we must needs be fully instructed in every thing that he would have us to believe and do.

Hence therefore, they who have given up their names to Christ, and are become his disciples, they are obliged, above all men, to bear much fruit ; to be and to do good in the highest manner that they possibly can in this world : forasmuch as they are taught of God, of their great Lord and Master Jesus Christ, what, and how, and why to do it ; they are taught of him to be *perfect, as their Father which is in heaven is perfect*, Matt. v. 48. They are taught of him to *love the Lord their God with all their heart, and with all their soul, and with all their mind, and their neighbours as themselves*, chap. xxii. 37, 38. They are taught of him, *that the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal*, chap. xxv. 46. They are

taught of him, *that except their righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, they shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven*, chap. v. 20. These and many such divine lessons they are taught of their master Christ ; and particularly, that it is not by their bearing some, but *much fruit, that God is glorified* : and therefore, unless they bear much fruit, do much good in the world, more than other people, they do not live as they are taught ; though they know their duty, they will not do it, and so must *be beaten with many stripes*, as he hath also taught them, Luke xii. 47

And besides, they ought to *bear much fruit*, because they have much strength whereby to do it, much more than other people have. For indeed other people have none at all, not so much as to be able to think any thing that is good ; much less to do it : for Christ himself here saith, *Without me ye can do nothing*, John xv 5. nothing that is good in itself, or that will be accepted of as so by God. And therefore all that are without him may talk of good works, and may seem to do them, but really they do none, nor can do any, no more than a branch that is cut off from the tree can bring forth fruit. This we may be sure of, for we have it from Christ's own mouth, saying, *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine ; no more can ye, except ye abide in me*, ver 4. But then he adds, *I am the vine, ye are the branches : he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit*, ver. 5. Whereby we are fully assured, that all who by faith are united unto Christ, and continue his faithful disciples, sound members of that body whereof he is head, they continually receive such supplies of grace and virtue from him, as to be able to bring forth much fruit ; all that is expected or required of them, in that state and condition of life, wherein God is pleased to set them. This St. Paul found true by his own experience, being able to say, *I can do all*

things through Christ which strengtheneth me, Phil. iv. 13. And all that are truly Christ's disciples, as he was, may find and say the same as truly as he did; for his *grace is always sufficient for them; his strength is made perfect in their weakness; his power resteth continually upon them*, 2 Cor. xii. 9. And what cannot they do, who have such almighty power by which to do it? There is nothing but they can, and, by consequence, nothing but they are bound to do; otherwise the grace that is bestowed upon them would be in vain, and to no purpose: which all that are Christ's true disciples dread above all things else, and therefore must needs make it their constant care and study to bring forth much fruit, to do so much good in the world, that all that see them, may admire and magnify his grace and power in them.

This brings us to our next stage, the reason which Christ himself here gives, why his disciples should *bring forth much fruit*, even because this is for the glory of God: *Herein*, saith he, *is my Father glorified*: my Father, that is God, who is his Father not only as he is man, but likewise as he is God and man in one person. For being made so by the power of God, therefore also that holy thing is *called the Son of God*, Luke i. 35. But he calls him his Father also, as he himself is God; for as such also, he is the only-begotten of the Father, his essential and eternal Son: *Herein*, saith he, *is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit*: not that ye bear some, but much; not by your being as good, but by your being better and doing more good than other men.

But here we must consider, what is meant by God's being glorified; how he is glorified by our *bearing much fruit*; and wherein the force of this argument lies, that we should *bring forth much fruit*, because God is hereby glorified.

When God therefore is said to be glorified, we must not understand it so, as if any thing could be added to his essential glory; for that being infinite, as himself, it

is not capable of any accessions, but is still the same, whether we bear much fruit, or none at all ; whether we do good or evil, it is all one to him ; he is neither better nor worse, neither more or less glorious by any thing we do, or do not : but he is then said to be glorified, when his creatures see and acknowledge his infinite and transcendent glory. It was for this end he made all things, even to manifest his infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, and the rest of his most glorious perfections, to such of his creatures, as he, for that purpose, hath made capable of reflecting upon them. And when they accordingly do reflect upon them, so as to own and admire, and set forth the glory of them, they are then said to glorify him, or to give him the glory that is due unto his name.

And thus it is that he is glorified by all the good works that his people do ; according to that of our Saviour to his disciples, *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*, Matt. v. 16. To the same purpose is that of St. Peter to all Christians ; *Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they spake against you as evil-doers, they may, by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation*, 1 Pet. ii. 12. For as the glory of his wisdom, power, and goodness, shines forth in his creation and government of the world ; so the glory of his mercy also, and truth, shines forth in the redemption of mankind, and in all the good works they do in order to their attainment of it : for seeing they do them all only by his assistance, the glory of them must needs redound to him. Herein we see the glory of his mercy in promising such assistance, and the glory of his truth in fulfilling the said promise, and therefore cannot but admire and praise him for it.

And certainly, as we have infinite cause to praise God for every thing he doth, so particularly for this : that we, who by nature can do nothing else but sin, and are

utterly averse to every thing that is good, should, notwithstanding, be enabled by him to do good works, such works as he himself can accept of as good. For this most clearly sets forth the glory of his *grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ*, John i. 17 without which, no man could ever have done any one good work : whereas, by this means any man may do all that is required of him ; which is as great an instance as can be given of the divine wisdom, power, goodness, mercy, and truth all together : for here we see the glory of his wisdom shining in the admirable way that he hath made, for the restoring lost man to his first estate, and the purifying his corrupt nature, so as that he may be, and do good again. Here we see the glory of his power shining in fruit brought forth by trees that were quite withered and dead ; in holy and righteous acts performed by those, who of themselves had neither power nor will to perform them : here we see the glory of his goodness shining forth, in his approving and accepting of works imperfectly done, as well as if they had been done perfectly : here we see the glory of his mercy shining forth in his forgiving the sins of his people, and the infirmities of their best performances : here we see the glory of his truth also shining forth, in his exerting these his divine perfections continually, according as he had promised in Jesus Christ, from the beginning of the world. So that there is nothing which he hath made or done, wherein his glory shines more gloriously, than it doth in the good works which his people do by his grace and power.

This may be made plain to the meanest capacity, by the similitude of a vine or vineyard, which our Lord here useth for that purpose, saying, *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman*, ver 1. For when a vine bears no fruit, it reflects much upon the husbandman, as if he had not taken that care of it, and dressed it as he ought : but if it bear much fruit, that

is much for his credit and reputation, as shewing his skill and care about it. So when they, who profess themselves to be Christ's disciples, live, notwithstanding, like other men, without doing any good in the world; this is a great dishonour to their Master: for men will be apt to think that he had not taught them so well, nor taken such care of them, as he might have done. But when they are fruitful, abounding in every good work, this is highly for the honour of God, in that he plainly shews, that he, according to his word, hath wrought in them, *both to will and to do of his good pleasure*, Phil. ii. 13. *Insomuch that they are filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God*, chap. i. 11. And therefore he might well say, *In this is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit*. And we may well praise God, and bless and glorify his holy name, for all his saints and servants departed this life in his true faith and fear

But why is this here used as an argument, wherefore we should *bear much fruit*, because God is thereby glorified? What is that to us? Wherein are we the better for that? Much every way; for that God may be glorified by us, is the best end we can ever aim at, and the greatest good we can ever get: it was for this end he made us at first; it is for this end he still remains and upholds us in our being; it is for this end he doth every thing he doth, and gives us every thing we have; it was for this end he redeemed us too, by the blood of his only-begotten Son: *for ye are bought with a price*, saith the apostle, *therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are his*, 1 Cor. vi. 20. And, by consequence, when we glorify God, we both answer and attain the end of our creation, preservation, and redemption; and of all the favours that God is pleased to bestow upon us; which is the greatest happiness and satisfaction to our minds that we can possibly have: for hereby our souls

are at rest, in their proper centre ; it being impossible to look farther, or aim higher, than at the supreme end of all things : yet this they actually attain, who glorify God. Other people live to no purpose, they to the best that can be ; to that for which they came into the world ; and therefore they always live under his care and protection that sent them hither : they do the business he sent them about ; they glorify him, and are so highly in his love and favour for it, that he is graciously pleased to glorify them : *them that honour me*, saith he, *I will honour*, 1 Sam. ii. 30. *And if any man serve me*, saith our Lord, *him will my Father honour*, John xii. 26. And how happy must they needs be, whom God himself is pleased to honour ? This honour have all they who glorify God ; they have it not only in this world, but the next too ; where, as they shall glorify him, so they shall be glorified by him, for ever

From hence therefore we may see, that as the glory of God is the great end which we ought to propose to ourselves in every thing we do, according to that of the apostle, *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*, 1 Cor. x. 31. so this is the greatest motive, the strongest argument that can be used, wherefore we should *bring forth much fruit*, even because God is thereby *glorified*. And we ought to do so for that very end and reason, according as we are here taught by our great Master, *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit*.

And so, saith he, *ye shall be my disciples* : which is another motive to our *bearing much fruit*, to our doing much good in the world ; even because, by this means, we shall be Christ's disciples, his disciples indeed. Other people may be called his disciples, and may seem to be so in the eyes of men ; but they who *bear much fruit*, are really so in the eyes of Christ himself : he owns, he esteems, he asserts them here to be his disciples ; we have his own word for it, and therefore may be confident, that all who *bear much fruit* are his disciples ;

yea, therefore his disciples, because they *bear much fruit*. This being both an infallible sign that they abide in him, and the reason also why he reckons them to do so: *If ye continue in my words, saith he, then are ye my disciples indeed*, John viii. 31

My disciples indeed. Whereby he gives us to understand, that he hath another sort of disciples, so called, which are his disciples only in name, profession, and outward appearance, not in truth and reality: they may reckon themselves his disciples, but he doth not reckon them to be so, nor will own them for such at the last day: hark what he himself saith, *Many shall say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have not we prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity*, Matt. vii. 22, 23. How confident were these people that they were Christ's disciples? And what good ground did they seem to have for it, seeing they did not only profess his name, but had done many wonderful works by it? Yet, after all, he will not own them, and all because they wrought iniquity: they did not live as became his disciples, and therefore he will not own them to be so.

He hath had many, too many such disciples all along: there were such in the apostles' days, of which St. Paul speaks with tears in his eyes, saying, *Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies to the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, who mind earthly things*, Phil. iii. 18, 19. I wish we could not take up the same complaint now: but alas! we have but too much cause, when the greatest part of those who profess themselves to be Christ's disciples, live not only in the neglect of his discipline, but quite contrary to it; when instead of loving one another, which he hath made the mark of his disciples, John xiii. 35. *they hate and devour one another*; when instead of seeking the king-

dom of God and his righteousness, in the first place, as he hath directed them, Matt. vi. 33. they never seek it at all, nor regard it any more than as if there was no such thing to be had; when instead of that piety and temperance which he hath taught them, they give themselves over to all manner of profaneness and debauchery; when his divinity is openly opposed, his doctrine contradicted, his service neglected, his sacraments slighted, his religion turned into schism and faction, and so his sacred name abused by those very persons who profess it. What is, if this be not, *to crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and to put him to an open shame?* Woe be to such Christians! It would have been well for them if they had never been baptized; well if they had never been born at all: for what will Christ say to them at the last day? not *Come, ye blessed*, but *Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*.

But how happy, on the other side, are they who bear much fruit, and so are his disciples indeed! He looks upon them as his own, and loves them to the end, John xiii. 1. He takes a particular care of them, and all their concerns: he prays for them, he prays not for the world, but for them which God hath given him out of the world, John xvii. 9. He is their advocate with the Father, continually making reconciliation and intercession for them: he washeth them from their sins in his own blood, and presents them holy and spotless before God: he gives them his own most holy Spirit, to lead them into all truth, to direct them in all their ways, and to support and comfort them in all the occurrences of this life: he makes all things work together for their good: he communicates to them his own most blessed body and blood, to preserve both their souls and bodies to eternal life: he is always with them while they live, and when they die he receives their souls or spirits to himself, Acts vii. 59. And at the last day he will set them on his right hand, and say unto them, *Come, ye blessed*

of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the beginning of the world, Matt. xxv. 34. Where they shall live with him in glory, and shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father, for ever, Matt. xiii. 43.

Now what a mighty encouragement is this to us all to *bear much fruit*, seeing we shall then be Christ's disciples indeed, and, by consequence, as happy as Christ himself can make us. This therefore is that which I would now, in his name, advise you to. You are all baptized into Christ, and so made his disciples; you still profess yourselves to be so; you call upon his name; you hear his word; you own him to be your Lord and Saviour, and hope accordingly to be saved by him: but take heed, that after all you be not deceived, as you certainly will be, unless you observe all the rules that he hath set you, and so bear the fruit that he expects from all that are planted in his vineyard: *for now the axe is laid to the root of the tree; therefore every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire, Matt. iii. 10.* Remember what he himself hath taught you in the parable of the fig-tree: when the master of the vineyard, where it was planted, came year after year, and sought fruit thereon, but found none, he said to the dresser of his vineyard, *Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?* Luke xiii. 7 And have a care that this be not your case. Blessed be God, you are all admitted into his church, and so planted in his vineyard; but you serve only to cumber the ground, and therefore will be cut down ere long, and cast into the fire, unless ye bear fruit.

And much fruit too; for there is more expected from a tree that is planted in a garden, than from that which grows wild in a barren wilderness. It is not enough for you to be like the best of Jews, Turks, or Heathens, that never heard of Christ, or never owned him for their Saviour: you have given up your names to him, professing to be his disciples, to believe and do as he hath taught

you; and if you really did so, as he is the best of masters, you would be the best of men; excelling all others, more than they excel the beasts that perish.

This therefore is that which I must now advise you to do; be no longer careless and indifferent about your religion, as if it was no great matter whether you be of any or no, but mind it in good earnest; follow it with all your might, tread in your Master's steps, by making it your meat to do the will of your heavenly Father, and to finish the work which he hath given you to do, even to glorify him in the world, John iv. 34. xvii. 4. Study every morning how you may serve God best, and do most good that day, in the place and station wherein he hath set you, and according to the ability that he hath given you. *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things*, Phil. iv. 8. Think on them, and do them heartily, sincerely, constantly; that you may adorn your Christian profession, with all the sorts of good works, which it requires of you. By this you will glorify God, and shew yourselves to be Christ's disciples indeed: for you will then be as trees that bear much fruit, and will therefore be counted worthy to be transplanted ere long into paradise, where you will flourish, and enjoy the fruits of your labour, for ever, through him who is gone before to prepare a place for you, even Jesus Christ, *to whom be glory, &c.*

SERMON XXXIX.

THE USEFULNESS OF FASTING.

I COR. ix. 27

But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection ; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.

FROM your presence here at this time, I cannot but in charity infer three things ; first, that you all believe a future state ; and that as really as you are now in this, it is not long but you will all be in another world, either in a world of happiness, or else in a world of misery ; for if you do not believe this, it is to no purpose for you to come hither ; this place and work having a peculiar reference to the other world, and not to this where we now are. Secondly, hence I infer likewise, that you are fully persuaded that your condition in the other world will be according to your behaviour in this ; that if you continue in your sins here, you will there be miserable ; but if you repent and turn to God, you will be happy for ever ; for certainly you would not come hither to learn what to do in order to your future happiness, unless you were fully persuaded beforehand, that you must do something in order to it. Hence therefore, in the third place, I conclude also, that you all desire, when you leave this, to go to a better world, even to heaven, the only place of real and eternal happiness ; for what need you to come hither to know how to get to heaven, if you do not care whether you ever come there or no ?

Taking it therefore for granted, that your minds are possessed with a firm belief of another world, with a full persuasion that you shall live there in happiness or misery, according as you live here in holiness or sin, and with hearty desires to carry yourselves so while you live, that when you die you may go to heaven ; this, I say, being taken for granted, it cannot but be very seasonable and suitable to your design in coming hither, to explain these words of the apostle, which I have now read unto you ; wherein you have the great end which the apostle did, and you, I suppose, do aim at in all your actions, even how to get to heaven ; and then, secondly, one of the means whereby he did, and you, by the blessing of God, may, attain that end, even by keeping the body under, and bringing it into subjection ; *I keep under my body*, saith he, *and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached unto others, I myself should be a cast-away.*

As for the first, it is plain from these words, that one of the great ends St. Paul aimed at, the great designs he carried on in all he did, was to save himself as well as those that heard him. He was conscious to himself that the efficacy of the word and sacraments which he administered did not depend upon his own personal holiness, but upon his apostolical office, and the promise of the Spirit annexed to it ; and therefore that it was very possible for him to be an instrument in God's hand to save others, and yet he himself be damned ; that he might shew others the way to heaven, and yet he himself not walk in it. Hence he took special care all along, lest that by any means when he had preached to others, and taught them how to obtain the crown of glory, he himself should lose it, by being ἀδόκιμος a cast-away, a reprobate, one not approved of as fit to have it set upon his head.

And if St. Paul himself used so much care and diligence, lest, after all the pains he had taken for the salvation of others, he himself should miss of it ; what cause

have we to do so, who are now entrusted with the administration of the word and sacraments? Certainly we had need to look about us, lest after all our preaching unto others, we ourselves should perish everlastingly; especially considering that we cannot but be all sensible, that it is far easier to preach the Gospel than to practise it; to tell others what to do, than to do it ourselves; and therefore whatsoever pains we take in the one, we had need to take as much, if not much more, to do the other too: for what a sad thing will it be, to see many converted by our ministry shining in heaven's glory, and we ourselves lie scorching in eternal flame? To see them with Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, solacing themselves in those rivers of pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore, and ourselves in the mean while with Dives in hell torments, without so much as a drop of water to cool our inflamed tongues? And yet St. Paul foresaw this would be the consequence of his preaching the Gospel to others, unless he himself lived up unto it; and therefore we may be confident it will be so unto us too; but I would not have you think that this concerns us of the clergy only; the same argument holds good as to all others. For if so holy a person, as we must all acknowledge St. Paul to have been, after all his preaching salvation unto others, was so solicitous about his own; what cause then have you to fear, lest after all your reading and hearing the word of God, after all your public and private devotions, after all your receiving the sacrament of the Lord's supper, you at last be cast-aways, and so lose all your pains and labour? And, by consequence, how much doth it concern you all to take as much care, if possible, as St. Paul himself did, of your future happiness? I am sure all that are wise amongst you cannot but look upon this as a matter of the greatest importance that you have or can have in this world; and howsoever any of you may think otherwise at present, it is not long but you will all be of the same mind; which that you may be before it be too late, I pray and beseech

you all seriously to consider, that you have another world to live in as well as this, an eternal world, where you must abide either in the height of happiness, or else in the depth of misery for evermore, so that as really as you now live amongst men, you will there live either with Christ and his holy angels, or else with the devil and his damned fiends unto all eternity.

Do but seriously consider this, and you will need no other arguments to persuade you to follow the example of this great apostle in this particular, even to make it your daily, your constant, your only care and business in this world, to prepare and fit yourselves for the other, that when you come to die you may then begin to live, to live with God, to live in light, in love, in rest, in peace, in joy, in heaven itself; in heaven, I say, where we shall be freed from all those griefs and troubles, from all those cares and fears that here distract our minds, and make us restless and uneasy. In heaven, where we shall trample upon this lower world, and ride in triumph over both sin and Satan, so as never to be tempted or disturbed more: in heaven, where our souls shall be reduced to their primitive frame and temper, and be made so perfectly happy, as to be perfectly holy: in heaven, where our thoughts shall be always pure, our minds serene, and our hearts transported with love and joy in the chiefest good: where we shall always behold the glory, admire the perfections, and enjoy the presence of the great Jehovah, so as always to apprehend him as well pleased with us, rejoicing over us, and manifesting his infinite love and goodness to us; which is so great, so exceeding great an happiness, that it may justly strike us into admiration, how it is possible for such silly creatures as we are to enjoy and bear it; yet how great soever it be, there is never a soul here present but as yet is capable of it, and invited to it; and if you be not failing to yourselves, you may all ere long be admitted into the actual possession of it.

But for that end you must still remember, that as

heaven is the highest happiness you can attain to ; so it is the hardest matter in the world to attain unto it : I speak not this to discourage any of you, but I would not have you fooled by the devil and his emissaries into a groundless conceit, that it is easy to get to heaven ; for Christ himself, by whom alone it is possible for any of you to come there, hath told you the contrary, assuring you with his own mouth, *that the gate is strait, and the way narrow, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it*, Matt. vii. 14. And you cannot but all acknowledge as much, if you do but consider what is necessary in order to it ; for what must you do that you may inherit eternal life ? or rather, what must you not do ? You must mortify every lust, for one sin will keep you out of heaven as well as twenty ; you must exercise every grace, and perform every duty that is required of you both to God and man ; you must *walk in all the commandments of God blameless*, to the utmost of your knowledge and power, so as to be sincerely, entirely, and constantly holy in all manner of conversation ; for it is the irrevocable decree of heaven, that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*, Heb. xii. 14. And therefore if ever you desire to see the Lord in glory, you must live above the world whilst you are in it, and condemn it while you use it ; you must gather up all your scattered affections from all things here below, and fix them upon God, so that all the inclinations of your souls must meet and rest in him as their only centre, otherwise you will not be *meet to be partakers of the inheritance with the saints in light*, nor capable of those pure and spiritual joys, which are there prepared for you.

But if these things be so, you may say to me, as the apostles said to our Lord, *Who then can be saved ? for who is sufficient for these things ?* To that I answer, It is true, if we look no further than ourselves, we may justly despair of ever knowing what heaven is ; but our comfort is, that our sufficiency is of God, who

is always ready to assist us in the use of those means that are appointed by himself; amongst which we are now, in the second place, to consider one of the most effectual, even that which the apostle tells us he himself used, saying, *I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.*

In speaking to which, I shall not trouble you with any critical observations about the Greek words ὑποπιάζω καὶ δουλαγωγῶ here used; for our English translation gives you the full sense and meaning of them, as well as any words are able to express it: *I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection*; as if he should have said, I being still in the body, and finding by experience that that is very apt to resist and rebel against my soul, to tempt me to vice, and to hinder me in the exercise of virtue, I therefore take care to keep it under, in such a temper as that it may be always subject unto, and ready to observe, the dictates of my reason, and the motions of God's Spirit within me, and so be no hindrance, but rather a furtherance to me in my progress to heaven.

But for our better understanding of this we shall consider two things.

I. How the apostle did, and we may keep our bodies under, and bring them into subjection.

II. How much this conduceth to our being so holy here, that we may be happy hereafter, and so not be cast-aways, as the apostle here speaks.

The first will be soon dispatched; for it is plain that the apostle kept his body under, and brought it into subjection, by fasting and abstinence, as the fathers frequently observe; for as for those corporal chastisements by whipping and scourging of themselves, so commonly and ridiculously used by the papists in their solemn processions, St. Paul never makes any mention of them. He saith indeed, that he *was thrice beaten with rods, and five times received forty stripes, save one*, 2 Cor. xi. 24. but he received them not from himself or his

confessor, as the papists do, but from his implacable enemies the Jews. But when he afterwards saith, that *he was in hunger and thirst often, in fastings often*, ver. 27 by the former the fathers generally understand the hunger and thirst which he was forced to undergo in his travels and imprisonments ; by the latter, those voluntary fastings which he undertook himself, whereby to *keep his body under, and to bring it into subjection*, this being indeed the most, if not the only, effectual means to do it ; forasmuch as indulging the appetite, and constant feeding to the full, though without excess, swells the veins, and breeds those petulant and noxious humours in the body, which make it rampant and ungovernable ; whereas, on the other side, fasting and frequent abstinence withdraws the fuel which foment~~s~~ those combustions and tumults, those wars and rebellions, which the body raiseth against the soul, the inferior against the superior powers ; and therefore as it was by fasting that St. Paul did it, so it is by fasting that we must keep our bodies under, if we ever desire to do it effectually.

And so I come to the other thing to be considered, even how much this keeping the body under, by fasting and abstinence, conduceth to our being holy here, and by consequence happy hereafter ; which being a thing so seldom thought of in our age, and yet of greater importance than can easily be imagined, for the better explication of it I shall lay down these propositions.

First, therefore, true holiness, we must know, is seated only in the soul, and is indeed nothing else, but the right disposition of the several faculties of the soul, and their acting conformably to the law and nature of God ; and therefore though the soul can perform many acts of holiness without the body, the body can perform none without the soul ; and although to some acts, both parts are required to put forth themselves in their several capacities, yet they are no further acts of holiness, than as they proceed from the soul. Hence the soul

may be perfectly holy, and perfectly happy too, without the body, as in the state of separation, when the body is capable of neither.

2. Although the soul be a distinct substance from the body, and so is capable of acting separately from it, even whilst it is in it ; yet so long as it is tied to the body, and actually informs it, so as to be but one part of that composition, which we call man, it ordinarily makes use of the organs of the body, especially of the animal spirits, in all its actions, and those only are properly called human actions, which are thus performed even by the whole man, which therefore cannot but depend very much upon the temper of the body that concurs to the performance of them ; as we find by daily experience they do ; for if our bodies be out of tune, so are our minds too. If any thing affects our heads, disturbs our brains, and so disorders the animal spirits which the soul makes use of in its operations, they are likewise disorderly and irregular : as in music, though the artist be never so skilful, yet if his instrument be out of tune, there can be no harmony or melody in what he plays upon it. Yea none of us but may easily observe, that whatsoever humour prevails most in the body, as phlegm, choler, melancholy, or the like, our actions are usually tainted with it, inso-much that by them we may discover what that humour is which is most predominant ; from whence it plainly appears, that so long as the soul is in the body, although it was designed to rule and govern it, yet it is apt to be governed by it, and to humour it so far as to follow not its own reason and judgment, but the more impetuous inclinations of the sensitive part, although it be to its ruin and destruction.

3. Seeing therefore that the soul is the proper seat of holiness, and yet so long as it is in the body, it makes more or less use of it in all human actions, and is very apt to be swayed by it ; hence it necessarily follows in the third place, that the keeping the body under by fast-

ing, and so bringing it into subjection to the soul, cannot but conduce very much to the exercise of all true holiness ; for by this means the soul being kept always in its throne, with full power and authority over its subjects, the inferior faculties being under no restraint, its reasonings would be clear, its judgments sound, its counsels deliberate, it would act like itself, a rational and spiritual substance, and so would be as free from all sensual vices as when separate from the body, which inclines it to them ; and then it will begin to relish spiritual objects as suitable to its own nature ; for it will look upon virtue and vice, not as they are falsely represented by the imagination, corrupted with the humours of the body, but as they are in themselves, and so discern how lovely and amiable the former is, how odious and detestable the latter, and by consequence exerts all its power, to follow the one, and avoid the other.

To explain this more fully to ordinary capacities, I might descend down to particulars, and shew how keeping the body under, by fasting and abstinence, does of itself conduce to the mortifying of most lusts, and to the quickening the contrary graces in us ; for which end I need not instance in gluttony and drunkenness, for these being directly contrary, yea contradictory to true fasting ; where this is rightly observed, those vices must needs cease of their own accord, and the contrary virtues of temperance and sobriety take their place : the same may be said of luxury and uncleanness, for that proceeding only from too great a plenitude and luxuriancy of humours in the body, if your bodies be kept under as they ought to be, you will be as much averse from such sins, as ever you were inclined to them.

But I shall chiefly consider some other vices, which at first sight may seem more remote to our present purpose, as not depending so much upon the temper of the body ; as for example, are you apt to be angry and peevish, to fret and to be disturbed at every little thing that happens, as many are ? This commonly proceeds

from immoderate diet, or constant feeding to the full, which breeds abundance of choler, and over-heats the animal spirits, whereby they are apt to take fire, and be inflamed at every thing that occurs contrary to our present desires ; but by constant abstinence the choler would be abated, the spirit cooled, and so the mind reduced into a sedate, meek, and gentle temper

Are you addicted to pride ? although there be a spiritual pride, which degenerate souls are subject to, as well as fallen angels, yet that which mostly puffs up mankind with vain and foolish conceits of themselves, usually springs from the corruption of the fancy, caused by those malign vapours, which by reason of overmuch eating are exhaled from the stomach into the head, and there disturb the imagination ; but fasting prevents the very engendering of such fumes, and by consequence the corruption of the fancy by them, by which means the mind is able to judge of things as they are, and to see clearly that we neither have nor can have any thing in the world to be proud of, but many things to be humbled for ; and therefore the keeping the body under, is certainly the best way in the world to keep the mind humble and lowly.

Are you inclined to covetousness ? To dote upon the toys and trifles of this lower world ? This also must be ascribed very much to the depraved imagination, representing these little things as in a magnifying glass, and so making them seem to be what really they are not, great and amiable ; and therefore as fasting frees the imagination from such exhalations as corrupt it, so it must needs help to the mind's looking upon things as it were with its naked eye, and so passing a right judgment upon them, by which means it is soon brought to contemn and despise the world, as much as ever it admired or loved it.

Are you dull and heavy at your devotions ; not able to pray, to hear, to meditate, or serve the Lord without distractions ? Whence comes that dulness ? Whence

these distractions, but from that hurry of gross vapours in the brain, which obstruct its passages, and crowd about it so disorderly, that the soul cannot without much time and pains rally them together, and reduce them to such an order, as to make any tolerable use of them ? And therefore as these distractions are caused by over-much eating, so they may be cured by fasting : hence it is that none of you but may find by experience that you can never perform any spiritual exercise with that life and vigour, that cheerfulness and alacrity, that constant presence and composure of mind, as when your bodies are empty, and so kept under as to be in a due subjection to the soul.

I might instance in many other particulars, from whence to shew how fasting doth of itself conduce much to the extirpation of most vices, and to the planting and growth of true virtue and goodness in us ; but most others depend upon, or at least may be referred to, these already mentioned, therefore there is the same reason for them, as there is for those ; so that we may justly conclude this, with a remarkable passage of St. Hierome, in his Epistle to Celantio, where, speaking of the very words of my text, he saith, “ that fasting and abstinence, *Non castitati tantummodo, sed omnibus omnino virtutibus opitulatur*, helps not only to chastity, but to all manner of virtues whatsoever.”

But the great and principal reason of all why it doth so is still behind, and that is, because that fasting is so pleasing and acceptable to Almighty God, that he hath promised a blessing, a reward to it, whensoever it is rightly performed, and that too not by the mouth of a prophet, an apostle, or an angel, but by his own divine mouth when he was here upon earth ; for our Lord himself saith, *When thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast ; but to thy Father which is in secret : and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly*, Matt. vi. 17, 18. From whence it is plain, that if a man fast

not out of vain ostentation to be seen of men, and thought holy, but out of a sincere design to keep his body under, and so fit himself the better for the service of God, that man shall certainly be rewarded for it : but what reward shall we have ? Why, God will bless and sanctify it to the great ends and purposes for which it is designed. Fasting, as I have shewn, doth conduce much to our being holy, but it cannot make us so ; that is only in the power of God, the only fountain of all true grace and holiness ; but he being well pleased with fasting, where it is duly observed, doth by his own grace and Spirit make it effectual for the subduing our lusts, and for our performance of all holy and good works.

For our better understanding of this, we must consider, that although God can work with means, or without means, or by contrary means, as he himself sees good, yet he ordinarily makes use of the most fit and proper means that can be used for the effecting whatsoever he designs ; and it is presumption in us to expect he should do otherwise. But fasting, as we have shewn already, is a very fit and proper means, as of itself conducing much to an holy and virtuous life ; and therefore they who give themselves to fasting and abstinence as they ought to do, are always in God's way, using the proper means for the obtaining of true grace and virtue, and so need not doubt but he will bestow it upon them ; whereas they who refuse or neglect such means, have no more ground to expect his blessing and assistance, than they have to expect he should work miracles for them.

And besides that, although the most high God, the chiefest, the only good, be always ready and free to communicate of himself, and distribute the graces of his Holy Spirit, it is to those who are rightly disposed for the receipt of them, whose bodies are fitted and prepared for the inhabitation of the Spirit, or, as the apostle words it, *to be the temple of the Holy Ghost*. But certainly no bodies are so fit and proper for so divine,

so pure a guest, as those which by fasting and abstinence are kept in continual subjection to the soul ; for it being the soul that is primarily inspired and sanctified by the Spirit, unless the body be subject to the soul, it will not be subject to the Spirit that is in it, *but the flesh will lust against the Spirit*, Gal. v. 17 Whereas if the body be kept clean and pure, at the beck of the soul, always ready and willing to observe its commands, then the Spirit that enlightens, actuates, and quickens the soul, will with great facility diffuse its influences over the whole man, so as to sanctify it throughout ; for then the body being subject to the soul, and the soul to the Spirit ; as the Spirit is, so will both soul and body be in their capacities, pure and holy.

Hence it is that the greatest discoveries that God hath made of himself to men, and the most powerful effects of the Spirit upon them, have usually been when they were fasting, and so in a right disposition for them. Thus Moses was fasting forty days and forty nights, even all the while that he conversed with God upon mount Sinai, and received the law from him, Exod. xxxiv. Elias had fasted forty days and forty nights, when God discoursed so familiarly with him upon mount Horeb, 1 Kings xix. Our Lord himself also, though he had no need of it, his body being always perfectly subject to his soul without it, yet he also for our example and imitation fasted forty days and forty nights, even all the while that he was overcoming the devil, and had the angels to minister unto him in the wilderness, Matt. iv. Daniel was fasting when the angel Gabriel was sent unto him, to acquaint him with the precise time of the Messiah's coming, Dan. ix. The disciples at Antioch were fasting when the Holy Ghost in a miraculous manner spake unto them, saying, *Separate me Saul and Barnabas for the work to which I have called them*, Acts xiii. To name no more, Cornelius, by whose conversion the door of salvation was opened to the Gentiles,

was also fasting when the angel was sent to instruct him how to get to heaven, Acts x. 30. By all which it appears, that when men are fasting, and so their bodies are subject to their souls, then God takes the opportunity of manifesting himself and his will and pleasure to them, and also of directing and assisting them in the way to bliss ; and by consequence, that fasting is of greater moment to our being holy, than it is commonly thought to be.

Nay, after all, it is very observable, that it is so necessary to our being holy, that we can never be perfectly holy, until we fast perpetually, I mean in heaven, where our *bodies shall be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body*, and reduced to such an excellent temper, as neither to want nor desire food ; then, and not till then, will our bodies be brought into perfect subjection to our souls, and our souls to God ; so that instead of eating and drinking, we shall be always loving, always rejoicing, always praising, always honouring and obeying him ; and seeing that we can never arrive at the perfection of holiness, until we come to fasting altogether, we cannot surely but from thence conclude, that fasting must needs contribute much, not only to our being, as near as we can, like to the saints in heaven, but likewise to our coming to them ; and so, that the fathers did not more commonly than truly observe, that as it was by eating that we were cast out of Paradise, so it is by fasting that we are restored to it.

Thus I have briefly touched upon some of those many arguments which might be produced to demonstrate the excellency and usefulness of fasting. I am very sensible that this will seem strange doctrine to many in our age, like those St. Chrysostom speaks of, who *προσχίματι τελειότητος*, under a pretence of greater light and perfection, look upon themselves as far above so low a dispensation as this is, and therefore indulge their appetites, and laugh at such pitiful mean Christians as are forced

to give themselves to fasting; and I fear many of you that hear me at this time are of the same mind, and therefore think that fasting perhaps may be very good and needful for others, but not at all for themselves.

But what? Are you not commanded to fast as well as pray? And how come you to be disobliged from one duty more than from the other? Did not Christ himself say, Luke v. 34, 35. *that when he, the bridegroom, was taken from them, then his disciples should fast?* And are not you in the number of his disciples? Hath not he, your Master, taught you how to fast, as well as how to pray, and to give your alms? And do you think that he would teach you any thing, but what you are bound to do? Nay, are you not therefore bound to do it, because he hath taught you it? Did not he himself do it? Have not all the saints both in the Old and New Testament, and in all ages ever since, given themselves to fasting? Did not St. Paul himself do so? And do you think yourselves more pure, more holy, more perfect than St. Paul was?

Men and brethren, I heartily wish that every soul here present was so, even that you were all greater saints, more eminent Christians, than that great, that eminent apostle himself was; that you were all so free from vice, so full of grace, so sure of heaven, that you had not that occasion as he had to keep your bodies under, lest after all you be cast-aways! That you had all got that perfect conquest over yourselves, and lusts, as never more to be inclined or tempted to sin or vanity; then I must confess you would not have so much need of fasting, as St. Paul had, and therefore might be better excused from it than he was.

But I beseech you not to flatter yourselves with such groundless conceits as these are, as if you were more holy and spiritual than St. Paul was. Do but deal faithfully with yourselves, and you cannot but believe that you come far short of him in every point, in your love

to God, in your faith in Christ, in your zeal for the Gospel, in every true Christian grace and virtue whatsoever ; and therefore you must needs acknowledge, that if he, one of the strongest, most pious, and famous Christians that ever lived upon the face of the earth ; if he, I say, was forced to keep his body under, and to bring it into subjection by fasting, lest after all he should be a cast-away ; certainly you have all the reason in the world to fear, that you should be cast-aways indeed, unless you do so.

Do but consider these things seriously, and I am confident you will not blame, but thank our church for putting you in mind of this great duty : you will admire her prudence, and commend her care of those that live in her communion, in that she, in conformity to the primitive and universal church, hath appointed several days every year for the performance of this duty, which otherwise you would be too apt to forget ; and although some may think them too many, yet the greatest part of Christians in the world would rather judge them to be too few ; especially those that live in the East, for they observe many more ; but our church in this, as in all other things, keeps still in the mean ; and therefore besides the nights or eves before some holy-days, she hath appointed for days of fasting or abstinence only one day every week, to wit Friday, which hath always been observed in the church. One week in every quarter, viz. Ember week, in imitation of the apostles, who always fasted before they ordained any to the ministry : and lastly, the three Rogation days, and this great fast of Lent once every year, which was observed, if not by the apostles themselves, yet at least by apostolical men, or those that lived in the very next ages to the apostles, and so hath been continued as a time of fasting by all churches in all ages and places ever since ; which questionless would not have been, had not Christians all along found extraordinary benefit and advantage by it ; and I

do not doubt in the least, but that if all you that hear me at this time would be persuaded to observe all these feasts as you ought to do, you would find yourselves otherguess Christians at the year's end, than you are now ; for supposing you to be always temperate, without which you deserve not to be called Christians, and besides that, to observe these several fasts as they recur ; as your constant temperance would keep your bodies always in health, so your frequent abstinence would keep them always under, and bring them into subjection to your souls : by which means you would be every day more averse from your former lust, more inclined to God and goodness, more capable of his divine illuminations and assistances, more ready and able to serve God here, and more fit to go to heaven and enjoy him for ever.

Now these things being duly weighed, you cannot surely but look upon yourselves as concerned in interest as well as duty to fast ; and therefore cannot but be very solicitous to know how you may do it aright, even so as to make it effectual to the purposes aforesaid ; which therefore I shall endeavour to resolve you in as briefly as I can : for which end we must first know in general, that there can be no certain rules laid down as necessary to be observed by all men in this case ; for some require more fasting, some less, some none at all, even such as are weak and sickly, for to them their sickness supplies the use of fasting, in keeping their bodies under : hence it is that we commonly see sickly people have a deeper sense of God and religion, than others, because their bodies, by reason of their often infirmities, are constantly kept in subjection to their souls ; and they also who are of strong and healthful constitutions, are not bound to abstain for any long time from any manner of food, but only from such both for quantity and quality, as is apt to pamper the body, and to make it rebel against the soul ; and if we do but attain the end of fasting, even to keep our bodies under, and bring

them into subjection to the soul, we need not, we ought not to be too scrupulous about other things.

This being premised in general, I think it is not amiss to mind you of some particular rules which I think necessary to be observed, in order to the attaining our ends in fasting.

First, make no distinction at such times betwixt flesh and fish, as the papists do, who if they do but abstain from flesh, and what proceeds from it, think they fast sufficiently, how much soever they eat or drink of other things; but neither the Scriptures nor the primitive church ever observed any such distinction, neither doth it consist with the nature and end of fasting; but the old catholic way was, that when they fasted they abstained from all manner of food until the evening, and still observed Daniel's rule, who when he fasted *eat no pleasant or desirable food, neither did flesh nor wine come into his mouth*, Dan. x. 3. This the primitive Christians observed very strictly, that when they fasted they eat neither more nor better food than, as we use to say, to keep soul and body together; and as for wine, they would not so much as touch it; which, I think, is still necessary to be observed by all that would fast to any purpose.

2. Have a care of those superstitious ends which the papists propound to themselves in fasting, who think they worship God by it, and that they thereby make him satisfaction for their former sins, and merit his grace and favour for the future; but you, when you fast, do it only for that end which the apostle here mentions in my text, *even to keep your bodies under, and to bring them into subjection to your souls, that so you may not at the last be cast-aways*.

3. Have a care of falling into the other extreme, even of fasting too much, as well as too little; for, as St. Chrysostom observes from my text, the apostle kept his body under, but he did not kill it; he brought it into subjection, but not to destruction; he used it as a servant, not as an enemy, and therefore would not starve

it, for then he could expect no further service from it. Yea, it is St. Basil's observation upon these words, that they who fast too much, and so weaken and distemper their bodies, violate the apostle's rule; for he by fasting brought his body into subjection to his soul; they fast so as to bring their souls into subjection to their bodies, forcing them to spend their time in looking after their bodies, and serving them instead of being served by them. Hence the same apostle elsewhere commands us, not simply to *make no provision for the flesh*, but not so, as *to fulfil the lusts thereof*, Rom. xiii. 14. I suppose there are not many that need this caution, but there are some, and therefore I durst not omit it.

4. To your fasting always join prayer: these two frequently go together in Scripture, and ought not to be separated by us, for they strongly excite and quicken one another, insomuch, that our Lord himself tells us, *there are some kind of devils that cannot be cast out but by prayer and fasting*, Matt. xvii. 21. Some may be cast out by one, some by the other, some by neither alone; but there is no devil so powerful but he may be expelled, no sin so strong but it may be subdued by both together; and therefore when you fast, spend more time than ordinary in your private devotions, at least as much as you use to spend upon other days in eating, by which means you will lose no time from your particular, but gain much for your general calling.

5. To fasting and prayer add alms also, for these three Christ joined together in his preaching, Matt. vi. And Cornelius in his practice, Acts x. And so must we too. Insomuch that the ancients scarce ever speak of fasting, but they prescribe this as necessary to the due performance of it; and the general rule they lay down for it is this, that what you save by fasting yourselves, you must give away to the relief of others; by which means, without either the loss of time, or the impairing your estates, you may perform the three great duties of the Gospel, fast, and pray, and give alms; which even

severally are very acceptable to Almighty God, much more when they go together.

Lastly, when you have performed this duty as exactly as you can, have a care lest you place any confidence in it, but trust on Christ and him alone, to bless and sanctify it to the great ends for which you use it ; for Christ himself hath told you, that *without him you can do nothing*, John xv. 5. But by him there is nothing but you may do, as St. Paul long ago experienced ; saying, *I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me*, Phil. iv 13. And therefore whensoever you fast, as you must pray to God, so you must trust in Christ for his assistance of you, and then you need not fear but it shall most effectually conduce to *the keeping your bodies under, and the bringing them into subjection, so that you shall not be cast-aways, but happy for ever*. These are the rules which I judge necessary to be observed in fasting : and therefore whensoever I speak of fasting, I desire to be understood of fasting according to those rules, and no otherwise.

Thus now I have done my duty in acquainting you with yours. What effect a sermon of this nature will have upon you I know not, but fear it will meet with the same fate that sermons now-a-days use to do ; some will like one thing, some another, some nothing at all in it, but dislike and censure the whole ; and such will be far from resolving to practise what they have heard, that they are resolved already not to practise it, and such may now go out of the church, for I have no more to say unto them, but only this, that this sermon will one day rise up in judgment against them, and then they will wish they had observed it better, when it is too late ; but as for such amongst you, as seriously mind the concerns of another life, I have a few more words to speak to you, which I desire you to hear with patience and attention.

Beloved in the Lord, you cannot but all ascribe it to the infinite goodness and mercy of the most high God,

that you are still alive, and not in hell, but in a capacity as yet of getting to heaven, whither, I suppose, you all desire to go when you die: but heaven, you know, is a place where but few come, nor indeed any but real and true saints; and therefore as ever you desire to go thither when you die, you must while you live be sanctified wholly, you must mortify all your lusts, and subdue your passions, you must love and fear God above all things, you must serve, honour, and obey him with a perfect heart and a willing mind, and do all such good works as he hath prepared for you to walk in, which being no easy matter to do, you must lose no time, spare no costs, neglect no means that may be any way helpful to you in it; especially you must be sure to take St. Paul's course, you must *keep your bodies under, and bring them into subjection, otherwise you can expect no other but to be cast-aways, and undone for ever*

Hence therefore, I beseech you as your friend, I advise and exhort you as a minister of Christ, as you tender your eternal salvation by him, that you would now set upon this work, this great work, so long neglected by you, even upon fasting, not after a careless, customary, or hypocritical manner, but in good earnest, so as that it may be effectual to the keeping of your bodies in continual subjection to your souls; for which end, I suppose, the strict observation of the days prescribed by our church may be sufficient for most people; but if any of you find that that will not do your business, fast oftener, but still observing the rules laid down before, and never leave off till you have brought your bodies to such a temper, as no way to obstruct your passage to heaven, till you have mortified all your members that are upon the earth; till you find no sin reigning in your mortal bodies, so as to fulfil the lusts thereof; for till then you may be sure you have not fasted enough, or at least not aright; for God is so

ready to assist the constant and conscientious performance of this duty according to the aforesaid rules, that no sin, no devil is able to withstand it.

And do not say or think within yourselves, that this is an hard work, who can bear it? for if you cannot deny yourselves a meal's meat, or a little wine now and then, for Christ's sake, how is it possible for you to deny yourselves any thing at all for him? And then with what face can you call yourselves his disciples, when you have not so much as learnt the first part of the first lesson that he hath taught all those that come to him, even self-denial? And besides, how hard soever this duty may seem at first, by custom it will soon grow easy; when you have been once used to it for a while, you will find that comfort and satisfaction in it, and reap that spiritual benefit and advantage from it, that not only itself, but all other duties will be both easy and pleasant to you.

How happy therefore should I think myself, would it please Almighty God to make me an instrument in his hand, to persuade all you that hear me at this time to the diligent performance of this duty? For how happy then should we all be? Then our minds, being no way disturbed by our bodies, would be always kept in so fine, so delicate a temper, that we should think ourselves in another world; then we should despise the pleasures of this world, and leave them for brute beasts, and such men as live as if they were all body and no soul; then we should not be affrighted at the reproach of any evil, as knowing that all things shall work together for our good; nay, death itself would then be no terror to us, for we should not fear, but *desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ.*

And when that blessed time shall once come, being freed from these lumps of clay, which now put us to all this trouble, we shall be made like to the glorious angels themselves, and then we shall never be troubled with

eating or drinking more, but yet shall feast continually upon glory, goodness, all-sufficiency, pleasure itself; always enjoying, praising, adoring, and magnifying the eternal God, and our dear and ever-blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath purchased this grace and glory for us: to whom therefore, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, three Persons, one glorious and eternal God, be all honour, praise, and glory, from this time forth, and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON XL.

THE SUFFICIENCY OF GRACE.

2 COR. xii. 9.

And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

ALTHOUGH we all desire to go to heaven when we die, yet if we look no farther than ourselves, we can see no ground to hope for it ; for heaven is a place where none but real saints can come, such as have clean and pure hearts ; and so are fit to live with the holy angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, and to join with them in praising and enjoying the most high God, the chiefest, the only good ; but which of us can say, *I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin ?* Prov. xx. 9. If any of us say it, *we do but deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*, 1 John i. 8. For if we deal truly and faithfully with ourselves, we cannot but find by our own experience that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, much less to do any thing that is truly good, 2 Cor. iii. 5. But after all our attempts and endeavours after goodness and virtue, we still come far short of it. Though we *delight in the law of God after the inward man*, yet we see *another law in our members warring against the law of our minds, and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin, which is in our members*, Rom. vii.

22, 23. We all see it, or at least we may see it if we will, that our whole frame is out of order, so that we are naturally indisposed to every thing that is good, and inclined to sin and wickedness, although we know it to be so: *We know that in us (that is in our flesh) dwelleth no good thing; for though to will is present with us, yet how to perform that which is good we find not*, ver. 18. *But we find a law, that when we would do good, evil is present with us*, ver. 21. It is always present, and sticks to every thing we do, so as to corrupt and spoil it: neither are we only unable of ourselves to do any thing that is good, but such is our natural weakness, that do what we can, we are always falling into sin and mischief; we stumble at every stone that lies before us; nothing can befall us, but we are apt to make some ill use or other of it.

How much soever some may flatter themselves, this is plainly the case of all mankind by nature; and theirs most who are least sensible of it. How then can we ever expect to be saved? How is it possible for any of us to walk upright in the narrow path that leads to life; and to do all things necessary in order to it? No way certainly, unless we have more strength than our own to walk and to act by; but our comfort is, that what is wanting in us, we may have it abundantly supplied by Omnipotence itself: for we have an almighty Saviour, ready upon all occasions to assist us, and to carry us through the whole work of our salvation, if we do but apply ourselves unto him for it, as St. Paul here did, and therefore received this gracious answer from him, *My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness*.

But that we may see into the true meaning of this answer of God, it will be necessary to look back upon the occasion of it. St. Paul, above fourteen years before he wrote this epistle, had been caught up into the third heavens or paradise, whether in the body or out of the body he could not tell, but there he was, and heard

unspeakable words, which it was not lawful, or rather not possible, for a man to utter ; which was such an extraordinary favour vouchsafed to him from his Lord and Master Christ, that it was likely to have bred in him too high an opinion of himself, and so it would have done if he that granted it had not at the same time taken care to prevent so great an abuse of it ; but lest he should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelation, there was given a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet him, lest he should be *exalted above measure*, ver. 7 What this thorn in the flesh, this messenger of Satan, was, we are not concerned to know. I know expositors make a great stir about it, some saying it was one thing, some another ; but none can tell certainly what it was ; and it is much if they should, seeing the apostle, by the direction of the Holy Ghost, was pleased to conceal it from us, and that doubtless out of great favour and kindness to us, it being much better for us not to know it, than to know it ; for if he had specified what it was that troubled him at that time, we should have been apt to apply the answer he afterwards received only to that particular occasion, or to troubles only of that nature ; whereas it being said only in general, that he had *given him a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet him* ; every one may apply it as he hath occasion, to all sorts of troubles which he meets with, either from the world or the devil ; and this seems to be the reason why the Holy Ghost in this, and many other places of the Scripture, speaks only in general terms, leaving us to make application of what is said to particular cases, as they happen to occur

Here, be sure, we have an universal remedy prescribed, and recorded for all sorts of troubles that we can labour under ; whatsoever thorn is given us in the flesh, what messenger of Satan soever is sent to buffet us, if we do but take the same course as St. Paul did for it,

we shall come off conquerors, and grow better by it as he did.

But what course did the apostle take for it? *For this thing*, saith he, *I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me*, ver. 8. Where we may observe, first, that he addressed himself to God our Saviour, who all along in the New Testament is called the Lord; wheresoever we read of the Lord, it is always to be understood of the Lord Christ, and so the apostle in this place interprets it; for when he had said, *that he had besought the Lord, and that the Lord had said to him, My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is made perfect in weakness*; he adds most gladly, *therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me*; which plainly shews that Christ was the Lord to whom he prayed, and from whom he received that gracious answer.

We may observe also, that St. Paul did not content himself with praying once and again, but for this thing he besought the Lord thrice; as our Lord himself prayed to his Father three several times for the same thing, in the same words, Matt. xxvi. 44. So did his apostle pray to him, and it is left upon record that he did so, that we may learn by his example as well as precept to *continue instant in prayer*, Rom. xii. 12. and never leave off till we have received an answer.

But that which is chiefly to be observed here, is the answer which he received. He had prayed that the messenger of Satan might depart or be removed from him. Our Lord said to him, *My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness*; which, though it was no direct answer to that particular request which he had made, yet it fully answered the general desire of his soul; and that which he would have requested, if he had known as well as our Lord did what was best for him: he being sensible of his own weakness, and now finding a great burden laid

upon him, which he thought impossible for him to bear without sinking under it ; he desired it might be taken off, which he would never have desired, if he had thought that he could have borne it to the glory of God, and the furtherance of the Gospel, the great end he aimed at in every thing he did or suffered : but our Lord in effect bids him be of good comfort, and not to trouble himself about his being unable of himself to bear what was laid upon him : for, saith he, *My grace is sufficient for thee* : as if he had said, the favour and kindness which I have for thee is sufficient to carry thee through this and all other troubles which I shall see good to exercise thee withal ; and the better to confirm the apostle's faith in what he said, he adds, *for my strength is made perfect in weakness* ; that is, the height and perfection of my power shines forth most gloriously in the weakness and infirmities of my servants : the weaker they are in themselves, the more doth my strength appear in my assisting and enabling them to do and suffer my will and pleasure.

Our Lord therefore granted not only all the apostle prayed for, but much more : he had prayed only to be eased of that trouble he now lay under ; and so he was, by being told by Christ himself that he should have strength enough whereby he might easily bear it, and not only that, but all other troubles that he should ever meet with ; for though his prayer was particular, the answer is general ; *My grace is sufficient for thee : my strength is made perfect in weakness*, not only in this, but upon all occasions whatsoever : and so the apostle plainly understood it, as appears from his drawing this inference from it : *most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* He speaks of all his weaknesses or infirmities in general, that he would rather glory in them than sink under them, now that our Lord had given him such a general and gracious answer as this is ; and though it was given only to St. Paul, and

that too upon a particular occasion, yet it is left upon record among the oracles of God, that all Christians may take notice of it, and make the same use of it upon all occasions as he did.

For what is said in the Scripture to any one of the saints of God, as such, is designed for all of that communion, as well as for that particular person to whom it is spoken ; and every one else may receive the same benefit and comfort from it which he did ; as when God said to Joshua, *I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee*, Joshua i. 5. Though this was spoken only to him, and likewise upon a particular occasion, even his leading the children of Israel into the land of Canaan ; yet the apostle applies it to himself, and to all the people of God, and to all occasions too that any of them can have for it, saying, *Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have* ; for he hath said, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee* : so that we boldly say, *The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me*, Heb. xiii. 5, 6. So here the Lord having said to St. Paul, *My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness* ; we all may boldly say, *The Lord is my helper, his grace is sufficient for us, his strength shall be made perfect in our weakness* ; and therefore we also most gladly will rather glory in our infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon us.

They who have no regard to their future state, may hear or read this without any concern ; but such as really seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, cannot but be mightily affected with it ; in that they are here assured by Christ himself, that upon their addressing themselves to him for it, he will supply them continually with grace and strength sufficient to carry them through all the changes and chances of this mortal life, till he hath brought them to himself in glory : for my own part, I think it is the only support and encouragement we have under the many difficulties that

we meet with in our passage to heaven ; and you would all be of the same mind, if ye did but fully understand, and duly consider, what Almighty God our Saviour here saith ; which therefore that ye may, I shall endeavour to give you the true sense and meaning of these words as they lie in order.

First, therefore, our Lord here saith to every one that believes in him, as well as to St. Paul, *My grace is sufficient for thee* ; where by his grace, he means that special love and favour which he hath for all his faithful servants and disciples. He himself is *full of grace and truth*, John i. 14. *And it is of his fulness that we all receive, and grace for grace ; for the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*, ver. 16, 17. All the grace and favour that God is pleased to shew us comes by Jesus Christ, and properly the grace of God, as he is our Saviour and Redeemer : and therefore it is commonly called, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*, Rom. xvi. 20. 2 Cor xiii. 14. *For ye know*, saith the apostle, *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich*, 2 Cor viii. 9. This was the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he impoverished himself to enrich us, he came down to earth to advance us to heaven ; *he was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him ; he died that we might live ; and greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend*, John xv. 13. Yet this love had Christ for all mankind, and still shews it to all that believe in him, and love him ; for they are his own even while they are in this world ; and *having loved his own that are in the world, he loves them to the end*, John xiii. 1.

This therefore is that special love and favour which he here calls, as we translate it, his *grace*, and saith it is sufficient for them. He doth not only promise it shall be, but he positively affirms it is so. *My grace*, saith

he, *is sufficient*, in the present tense, that we may be confident that it always is so ; but to what is it sufficient ? To every thing that is any way necessary to our obtaining eternal salvation ; for we believe, as St. Peter saith, *that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved*, Acts xv. 11. Eph. ii. 5, 8. And if we shall be saved by his grace, his grace must needs be sufficient for whatsoever is required towards our being saved ; for if there was any one thing wherein his grace could not help us out, we might be lost for ever, notwithstanding all that he hath done and suffered to prevent it : but there is no fear of that, for he himself hath said, that *his grace is sufficient for us* ; and therefore we may be sure it is so, in all and every respect whatsoever.

It is sufficient, first, for the rectifying all the disorders and distempers in our depraved nature, whereby we are so much indisposed for the doing good, and inclined to vice and wickedness, according to the several humours that are predominant within us. Several men, we know, are of several complexions ; scarce any two in all things alike ; some are of an hot and choleric disposition, and therefore apt to be passionate and angry upon the least occasion, and perhaps upon none at all ; others are cold and phlegmatic, and therefore apt to be dull, listless, and inactive, not caring to move or stir upon any account, although the glory of God and their own eternal welfare depends upon it. In some, melancholy prevails, so as to keep their spirits too low and sad ; in others, the animal spirits are so brisk and nimble, as to make them prone to be airy, fantastic, proud, ambitious, and self-conceited. Thus every one hath some corrupt humour or other in him, that is apt to lead him into sin, and put him under its dominion, so that it will reign in his mortal body, unless it be subdued by the grace of Christ ; but whatsoever it be, his grace is sufficient to bring it and to keep it under ; *for he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are but dust*, Psalm ciii.

14. He considers the several distempers and indispositions that every one is subject to, or labours under, and is ready upon all occasions to apply suitable remedies to every one of them ; and doth it for all those that are in his grace and favour ; as all are, who do not trust in their own works, but in him for it ; *sin shall not have dominion over them, because they are not under the law, but under grace, even the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*, Rom. vi. 14. It is sufficient also against all the temptations and assaults of our adversary the devil, *who as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*, 1 Pet. v. 8. He is prying in every corner, and observing what temper people are of, and what they are most inclined to, and accordingly he lays proper baits before them, wherewith to catch and draw them into his net, and the same wretched state with himself : he hath a thousand tricks and devices, more than we can imagine, to cheat men of their souls, by alluring them insensibly into this or the other mortal sin, according to their several inclinations : if that fails, he employs his agents to attack their faith, or draw them into some damnable heresy, which he knows will destroy them as effectually as any sin whatsoever : his power also is as great as his subtlety ; so great, that the strongest man in the world is no more able to stand before him upon his own legs, than the weakest.

But howsoever, they who are in the favour of Christ need never fear him, for his grace is always sufficient for them ; *he will not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it*, 1 Cor. x. 13. As we see notably exemplified in St. Peter : to whom our Lord said, *Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat ; but I have prayed that thy faith fail not ; and, when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren*, Luke xxii. 31, 32. Satan, it seems, had a mind to shew the utmost of his power and skill upon St. Peter, to

cast him, if it was possible, down from that happy state in which he was ; and God was pleased to give him leave to do all he could ; but Christ having a kindness for him, prayed that his faith might not fail ; by which means, though the apostle had as great a fall as ever man had, yet he soon got up again, and grew stronger afterwards, so as to be able to strengthen others also ; whereby we plainly see how sufficient the grace of Christ is for those who live under it, against all the malice and power of hell, and therefore it is no wonder that St. Paul had a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him : Christ had no sooner said, *My grace is sufficient for thee*, but he immediately defied the devil and all his messengers, and was so far from being troubled at his temptations, that he rejoiced in them, in that they afforded him matter of triumph, and glorying in the grace and power of Christ.

His grace is sufficient also in all states and conditions of life, whether a man be a prince or a subject, a master or a servant, rich or poor, high or low in the world ; of this, or that, or the other lawful calling, office, or employment, whatsoever it is, if he hath but the grace and favour of Christ, he needs no more to direct him what to do, to assist and strengthen him in the doing it, and to carry him safely through all the prosperity and success, as well as through all the crosses, troubles, and disappointments, that he can ever meet with in it : for Christ having all things put under his feet, and being given to be head over all things to his church and people, he makes all things in the world work together for their good, and enables them by his grace and Holy Spirit to make some good use or other of every thing that happens, so as to turn it to their own advantage ; for he never leaves them, but is always present with them wheresoever they are, and ready to assist them upon all occurrences, especially when they are in any great danger or necessity, he then makes haste to help them ; as when St. Paul was brought to his trial at Rome, at his

first answer no man stood with him, but all mēn forsook him; but, as he himself observed, *the Lord stood with him, and strengthened him, and delivered him out of the mouth of the lion*, 2 Tim. iv. 17 Neither was that the only instance he had of it; for he found the same divine grace and assistance going along with him through the whole course of his life, and all the changes of it, which were as many and as various as ever man went through: *I know*, saith he, *both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and suffer need: I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*, Phil. iv. 12, 13. Which may serve for a comment upon the words of my text, shewing how the grace of Christ was sufficient for him, in whatsoever state he was; he was no sooner in it, but he was enabled by Christ to bear it with that evenness and composure of mind, that he was neither exalted with prosperity, nor dejected at the troubles which befel him: nothing could move him one way or other; honour and disgrace, abundance and want, fulness and hunger was the same thing to him, because the grace of Christ was with him, and endued him with so much strength as was suitable and proportionable to his present circumstances, be they what they would.

But here we must farther observe, that the apostle speaking of his being able by the grace of Christ to bear whatsoever was laid upon him, he takes occasion from thence to assert upon his own experience, that it was sufficient also to enable him to perform whatsoever was required of him, saying, *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*: whatsoever he was bound to do by the law of God, he was able to do it by the grace of Christ. He excepts nothing; *I can do all things*, saith he; and so may all say who truly believe in Christ, as well as he, whatsoever is required of them in their several places and callings, whether in relation to

God, their neighbours, or themselves, they are able to perform it, though not by their own strength, yet by Christ that strengtheneth them ; though they have no strength in themselves, they have enough in him to carry them through their whole duty, so as to do all such good works as God hath set them.

Let us hear what he himself saith to this purpose : *I*, saith he to his disciples, *I am the vine, ye are the branches ; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing*, John xv. 5. This Christ, this truth itself, saith : what then if there be some proud and self-conceited people in the world, who flatter themselves and others with an high but groundless opinion of their own natural parts and power to do good, as if they were able to do mighty things with it ? What then ? Is not Christ to be believed before all the men in the world ? All men are liars, and they most of all, who so plainly and directly contradict the truth itself : he hath said, *that without him we can do nothing* ; and therefore I am sure that we cannot do any one good thing without him ; and I am sure, that if we abide in him, and he abides in us, we shall bring forth much fruit, or do much good in the world, even all that is required of us, because he himself hath also said it ; and seeing he hath said it, we may be confident that he will make it good, so that his grace shall be sufficient to work in us both to will and to do all manner of virtuous and good works, which are required of us in order to our obtaining eternal salvation by him ; and though as they are done by us in this our imperfect state, there may be many failures and imperfections in them, yet his grace is also sufficient to make up all their defects, and to render them as acceptable to God in him, as if they were absolutely perfect in themselves ; for, as his apostle tells us by direction, *all these our spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God* (though not in themselves, yet) *by Jesus Christ*, 1 Pet. ii. 5.

And verily it is well for us that we have it from Christ's own mouth, that his grace is thus sufficient for us ; otherwise, considering the frailty of our human nature, we could never have thought it possible for us, by any means whatsoever, always to stand upright, much less to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless ; but now we cannot doubt of it, seeing Christ himself hath said it ; and not only said it, but, for the greater confirmation of our faith in it, hath likewise given us the reason of it ; such a reason as must needs convince us, that, notwithstanding all our weakness and infirmities, his grace is sufficient for us ; *for, saith he, my strength is made perfect in weakness.*

Where by weakness, as it is opposed to the strength of Christ, we can understand nothing else but our natural infirmities, our impotence and inability to do or suffer the will of God as we ought, which in those who are unregenerate, and therefore not interested in the grace of Christ, is so great, *that they can neither do, nor speak, nor so much as think any thing aright*, 2 Cor. iii. 5. They may be wise to do evil, ingenious and subtle in the management of their worldly affairs ; *but to do good they have no knowledge, much less any power at all*, Jer. iv. 22. And they who are born again, and made the children of God, and therefore are led by his Holy Spirit, they also are still subject to so many infirmities by reason of their original corruption, that they cannot make any one true step in the ways of God, any farther than as they are led by the same Spirit. This our Lord himself took notice of in his own disciples, when they could not so much as keep themselves awake while he was in his agony, saying, *the Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*, Matt. xxiv. 41. The flesh, or that part which we derive from our first parents, is weak, so weak, that it is not able of itself to execute the will of the Spirit that is in us ; but is rather apt to put us upon acting just contrary to it, as St. Paul

observes ; *the good that I would do, I do not ; but the evil which I would not, that I do*, Rom. vii. 19. The same all men may see in themselves, if they will but look impartially into their own hearts and ways ; but none are more sensible of it, than they who set themselves in good earnest upon performing sincere obedience to the whole will of God. They often find their heads cloudy, their hearts cold and careless, their memories unfaithful, their passions turbulent, their thoughts scattered and wandering from what they are about ; their whole man so feeble, and out of tune, that do what they can, they cannot do what they would, at least not so as they would, and ought to do it ; which is a great trouble to them, so great, that it is sometimes ready to sink them down into despair, and to make them cry out with the apostle, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?* Rom. vii. 24.

But what doth the apostle do in this wretched case ? He immediately lifts up his heart to heaven, and cries out with the same breath, *I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord*, ver. 25. implying that God had hitherto delivered him, for which he heartily thanks him, not doubting but that he would still deliver him, though not for his own sake, yet through Jesus Christ our Lord. There was all his hope and confidence ; there was all his joy and comfort ; it was all placed in Jesus Christ, who, being the Lord of life, could deliver him when he pleased from the body of death, and the more to assure him of it, had said to him, *My strength is made perfect in weakness*. My strength, saith he, to let us know, that it is his own strength, that he hath it in himself, as he is God our Saviour. As God he is almighty, and can do what he will in the world ; and as God our Saviour, he exerciseth this his almighty power in the behalf of his church and people. *My Father*, saith, he, *worketh hitherto, and I work*, John v. 17. As the Father is always at work in the government of

the world, so God the Son is always working in them who believe and trust in him, that they may be saved, and therefore *is able to save them to the utmost who come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them*, Heb. vii. 25. Because he is continually making intercession for them, therefore his divine power is continually exerting itself in them, that he may save them to the utmost.

And thus his strength is made perfect in weakness; in the weakness of those upon whom it is exerted; the weaker they are in themselves, the more strength they receive from him; and the more perfectly doth his strength appear in supporting and saving of them; it is always with them and in them; *but they have this treasure in earthen vessels; that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of men*, 2 Cor iv. 7. They themselves are but frail and weak creatures, like earthen vessels made of coarse materials, and soon broken; and therefore the excellency and perfection of his power shines forth most gloriously in preserving them through faith unto salvation, that all the glory of it may redound wholly unto him; which the apostle was so sensible of, that when our Lord said to him, *My strength is made perfect in weakness*, he presently adds, *therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong*, v. 10. The weaker he found himself, the more was he strengthened by Christ; and as the strength of Christ was thus made perfect in his weakness, so is it in all others, who, being sensible of their own weakness, lay hold on him, and depend wholly upon his strength to help and save them: they also may say as truly as St. Paul did, *I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me*, Phil. iv. 13.

The last thing to be observed in these words is the inference which the apostle draws from what our Lord hath said to him: he had said, *My grace is sufficient*

for thee ; for my strength is made perfect in weakness : from whence the apostle immediately infers, *most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* He was now no longer overwhelmed with so much grief and sorrow for his infirmities, and natural inability to do the will of God, nor for the troubles which should befall him for it, although he was not able by his own strength to bear them, but rather rejoiced and glorified in them, as being a proper occasion for Christ to shew forth the glory of his power, or, as he himself expresseth it, *that the power of Christ might rest upon him.* In allusion, as the original word imports, to his resting between the cherubim over the mercy-seat in the tabernacle, and there manifesting his glory and power unto his people ; so he now rests upon those who believe in him ; *he dwells in their hearts by faith,* Eph. iii. 17 But where-soever he is, there he exerts his power ; and the weaker the place of his residence is, the more doth his power appear ; and therefore as the apostle did, so should we, not despond and despair at the sense of our infirmities, but rather be glad and rejoice that we have such an almighty Saviour, *whose strength is made perfect in our weakness ;* and take occasion from thence to live with a constant belief and trust in him ; *that his power may rest upon us, and the glory of it appear most gloriously in us.*

And verily whatsoever other people may think, they who are touched with a due sense of their sins, and manifold infirmities, cannot but receive unspeakable comfort, as well as wholesome advice and counsel from what they have now heard ; for they being conscious to themselves, that they have not only offended the Lord of hosts, the almighty Governor of the world, already, but cannot possibly of themselves ever do any thing else but provoke him, and so *treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God ;* how glad must they

needs be to hear it from his own mouth, that, notwithstanding all their provocations and infirmities, *his grace is sufficient for them*; sufficient not only to expiate all their former offences, but to cure them of all their distempers, to arm them against all temptations, to support them in all conditions, to carry them through the whole compass of their duty, and to reflect such a lustre upon it from the glory of his own righteousness and merits, that God himself will be well-pleased with it; that *in the Lord they may have both righteousness and strength*, Isa. xiv. 24. and that *his strength is made perfect in their weakness*, so as to shew itself in a more especial manner, when they have most occasion for it: how can they hear this, and not sing with the prophet, *Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song, and he also is become my salvation?* Isa. xii. 2.

But that we also may thus rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of our salvation, we must take special care that we do not turn his grace into lasciviousness, but that we apply and improve it to the purposes for which it is designed. Now the apostle tell us, that *the grace of God which bringeth salvation teacheth us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*, Tit. ii. 11, 12. This therefore is the lesson we must learn, this is the use we should make of the grace of God our Saviour; and for this it is sufficient in us all, as many in all ages have found by their own experience, who notwithstanding their original sin, and their natural imperfections and infirmities consequent upon it, yet by the grace of Christ became real saints while they were upon earth, and are now glorified and made equal to the angels in heaven; and why should not we be so as well as they? If we be not, it is our own fault: the grace of Christ is as sufficient for us as it was for them.

Let us therefore now come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need, Heb. iv. 16. Let us employ ourselves continually in the use of the means which he hath appointed wherein to bestow his grace upon us; and whatsoever we do in word and deed, let us do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, nothing doubting, but steadfastly believing, that, according to his word, his grace shall be sufficient for us, and his strength made perfect in our weakness; that he will wash us from our sins in his own blood, that he will preserve us from all evil, and make all things work together for our good; that he by his almighty power and Spirit will direct, sanctify, and govern both our hearts and bodies in the ways of his laws, and in the works of his commandments, so as to bring us at last to that everlasting kingdom, which he is now preparing for us in the highest heavens; that we may live with him, who liveth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, blessed for ever.

SERMON XLI.

FAITH THE GOVERNING PRINCIPLE OF A CHRISTIAN
LIFE.

2 COR. v. 7

For we walk by faith, not by sight.

ALTHOUGH the soul of man be in its own nature like to the angels themselves, and so as capable as they to converse with spiritual and immaterial objects ; yet so long as it is confined to the body, it is apt to confine itself within the narrow compass of such objects only as affect the several senses of the body, relishing nothing but what it can taste with the palate, looking no farther than to what it can see with the eyes, nor hearkening to any thing but what it can hear with the ears of the body ; and hence it is that those sensible objects have that power and dominion over the very minds of men, that their judgments and opinions of things, and by consequence their passions and affections, are commonly swayed and governed by them, insomuch, that we ordinarily judge things to be good or evil, and therefore love or hate, desire or abhor them, according as they seem to be agreeable or not agreeable to our senses ; by which means, although we have rational souls, we make but very little use of them, keeping them in continual subjection to the sensitive part, and so living more like brutes than men ; as if we were all body and no soul, all sense and no reason ; and they that do endea-

vour to act according to the rules and dictates of their reason, they find that too so apt to be corrupted and drawn aside by their senses, that it is difficult to say which is and which is not the result of pure and unbiassed reason.

But how dangerous and mischievous a thing it is, to give this deference to our senses, so as to suffer them to govern or influence our minds and actions either wholly or in part, none of us but may have found by our own experience. This being indeed the occasion of the greatest part of those errors which men are so prone to fall into, both in opinion and practice ; for whence comes it to pass, that so many are addicted to intemperance, drunkenness, uncleanness, and the like brutal vices, but that they are wholly under the power and dominion of their sensual appetite ? Why are men so earnest in their desires, so eager in their pursuit of earthly riches, but that they look no farther than things temporal, and are so solicitous about their bodies, that they take no care at all of their souls, or future estate ? Why do men rob and steal, cheat and over-reach one another, but to make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof ? Why are they so impatient under any calamity that befalls them, so angry and revengeful against the instruments of it, but because it is grievous to flesh and blood, how much soever it may conduce to their souls' good ? Why are they so ambitious of honour, credit, and applause from their fellow-creatures, but because it tickles their ears, and pleaseth their fancies to hear and see themselves commended and respected by them ? From whence comes wars and strivings among you ? Come they not from hence, as St. James saith, *even from your lusts that war in your members* ? James iv. 1. Why will not men endure sound doctrine, but because, as St. Paul speaks, *they after their own lusts heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears* ? 2 Tim. iv. 3. In short, what should be the reason that there now are, and always have been, so many sects and heresies, such

schism and sedition in the church, but because men study more to gratify their humours, and please their flesh, than to save their souls? Why else should the apostle reckon seditious and heresies among the works of the flesh which *lusteth against the Spirit*? Gal. v. 20.

Thus I might instance in most other sins, and shew how the great reason why we fall so often into them is, because we follow the bent and inclination of our senses, which hurry us into all manner of vice before we are aware of it; but this may suffice from whence to demonstrate how much it concerns us to live above our bodies, and not to indulge our senses any longer, but to bring them into a constant subjection to our souls. This philosophy taught, but could never practise; neither can we ever attain to it but by the constant exercise of that faith which the Gospel requires of us, as the principle of a Christian's life and actions; for as brute beasts live by sense, and men by reason, a Christian, as such, lives by faith, which raiseth up his mind so far above all sensible objects, that they have little or no force or power at all over him; and this is that which distinguishes a Christian from all other men, that whilst others live by sense or sight, so as to be wholly taken up with the affairs of this life, and those sensible objects they meet with here below; he that is a true Christian, a real disciple of the blessed Jesus, he lives by faith, as the apostle here speaks in the name of all true Christians, *we walk*, saith he, *by faith, and not by sight*.

Which words containing a plain and full description of a Christian's life, such as we all, I hope, desire to lead, it cannot but behove us very much to understand the full extent and latitude of them, that so we may know how to live as becometh Christians indeed: for which purpose we may first observe, that the apostle is here speaking of our pilgrimage in this world, and saith in the verse before my text, *that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord*; that is, we

are not so near him, nor enjoy him so as we shall do in the other world ; *for*, saith he, *we walk by faith, and not by sight* ; that is, so long as we are here upon earth we do not see God face to face, as we shall do hereafter in heaven ; but howsoever by faith we both see and enjoy him already, and it is not by sight, but by faith that we walk whilst we are here in the body ; but the words being included in a parenthesis, they may very well be looked upon as an entire proposition of themselves, as they plainly are, and so I shall consider them at present, even not in a limited, but in the largest sense they are capable of, as representing to us the way and manner of a Christian's life in this world ; it is a life of faith : to which purpose is that of the prophet, *the just shall live by faith*, Habak. ii. 4. which is thrice quoted by the apostle with reference to the life that now is, as well as to that which is to come. As it is by faith that the just shall come to heaven and live there, so it is by faith that they live here upon earth too. And it is their living by faith upon earth, whereby they come to live in heaven. There it is true they live by sight and not by faith ; but that we shall never do, except we first live by faith and not by sight.

Now to understand how to do this, we must consider two things ; first, what that faith is by which we ought to walk ; and then, how we ought to walk by it. As for the first, I know not whom we can better consult than the apostle himself, who as he here tells us, that he and all other Christians walk by faith, so elsewhere he tells us what that faith is, by which they walk ; *faith*, saith he, *is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*, Heb. xi. 1 where we have the true nature and notion of faith described, as it respects both the promises which God hath made us, and the truths which he hath revealed to us.

First, in respect of the promises which he hath made us, it is the substance of things hoped for. That is, whereas it hath pleased the most high God, of his infi-

nite mercy in Jesus Christ our Lord, to promise all good things to us, both for this life and the next, although we have them not as yet, we cannot but hope for them : and faith is the substance of all these things which we thus hope for at the hands of God ; or, as the Syriac translation renders the words, it is a full persuasion of those things which are in hope, as if they were in act ; for they being promised by God who cannot lie, if we really believe his word, we cannot but be as confident that we shall have them, as if we already had them. So that faith puts us as it were into the actual possession of them, and so is the very substance of them to us : for, as St. Chrysostom observes, whereas those things which are in hope, seem not to subsist, ἡ πίστις ὑπόστασιν αὐτοῖς χαρίζεται, faith gives them a subsistence, μᾶλλον δὲ οὐ χαρίζεται ἀλλ' αὐτό ἐστιν οὐσία αὐτῶν, or rather it doth not give it them, but itself is the very essence of them. So that by faith I am as certain of them in my mind, as if I had them in my hand. *Yea, by a true and stedfast faith in the promises of God, I really enjoy what he hath promised.* Thus we find this apostle acting the faith which he here describes. *For,* saith he, *God hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me,* Heb. xiii. 5, 6. Where we may observe how he applies the promise to himself, and looks upon it as actually fulfilled to him. Seeing God had promised he would not leave him, therefore he concludes he doth not ; seeing God had said, *I will be thy helper,* he confidently affirms that he is so, *he is my helper.* So that faith was plainly the substance of the things promised to him. Thus it is in all the promises which God hath made and sealed to us in the blood of Christ ; if we certainly believe that they are, they are most certainly performed to us ; our believing in them not only giving us a right and title to the things promised, but putting us into the actual possession of them ; forasmuch

as this is the only condition required in order to the performance of all God's promises, that we really believe that he will perform them to us : hence it is that nothing can withstand a firm and stedfast faith in God, as our Saviour himself assures us, saying, *Have faith in God ; for verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith*, Mark xi. 22, 23. And hence also it is, that he so often saith unto those which he cured of any distemper, *Thy faith hath saved thee*, and, *Thy faith hath made thee whole* ; and to the two blind men, *According to your faith, so be it unto you*, Matt. ix. 29. By all which expressions he plainly intimates to us, that according as we do or do not believe in God, accordingly we have or have not the good things that he hath promised to us, and, by consequence, that it is our faith that is the substance of them, or that which causeth them to subsist and be actually performed to us, yea, itself is so far the essence or subsistence of them, that by our very believing we do really enjoy them.

But this being a notion, which, if rightly apprehended and applied, will be of extraordinary use to us through our whole lives, in order to our living aright by faith, I shall explain it farther to you in some particular instances, such especially wherein it may be of more frequent and necessary use to us.

First therefore, we know that Almighty God, the fountain of all goodness, hath often promised not only to do us good, but to make us good, to give us such assistances of his own grace and Spirit, whereby we may be enabled to serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind. *A new heart*, saith he, *will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you : and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit*

within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27 And this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After these days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people, Jer. xxxi. 33. There are many such exceeding great and precious promises given us by God, *that by them*, as St. Peter saith, *we might be partakers of the divine nature*, 2 Pet. i. 4. Now these and such like promises being made us by God, by truth, and veracity itself, as we have all the reason in the world to believe them, so by our believing of them we have them really fulfilled to us. God hath said, *I will give you my Spirit to make you holy.* I take him at his word, I believe verily he will do as he hath said, and upon my thus believing of it, I have the Spirit, and so partake of the divine nature, according to his promise. Hence it is that the mortifying our lusts, the purifying of our hearts, the sanctifying of our natures, is ascribed to our faith, not in itself, but as it lays hold upon the promise of God's Spirit, who therefore doth it for us. *This is the victory*, saith St. John, *that overcometh the world, even our faith*, 1 John v. 4. Why so? but because by it we partake of God's Spirit, whereby we *mortify the deeds of the flesh*, as the apostle speaks, Rom. viii. 13. and so overcome the temptations of the world. Thus elsewhere we read, that God *purifies our hearts by faith*, Acts xv. 9. and that *we are sanctified by faith that is in Christ Jesus*, Acts xxvi. 18. How by faith; but as it is the substance of what we hope for, even the Spirit which he hath promised to us? Why by faith that is in Christ? but because in him all the promises of God are *Yea, and Amen*, as the apostle speaks, 2 Cor. i. 20. that is, as St. Chrysostom explains the words, *In Christ all the promises of God γενέσθαι ἔχουσι καὶ πληρωθῆναι*, *they have their existence and accomplishment, or confirmation.*

Thus therefore it is that we obtain grace and power from God to be, and to do good : he for that purpose, hath promised to give us his Holy Spirit ; we believe and trust in him for the performance of that promise, and therefore have it accordingly performed to us ; for our faith is the very substance of what we hope for upon the account of that promise which he hath made us, and actually invested us with the thing promised, even his Holy Spirit, whereby our minds are enlightened, our lusts subdued, our hearts cleansed, and our souls sanctified throughout, and wholly inclined to God and goodness.

But here we must further observe, that as these promises are made absolutely by God, without any other condition, but only that we use the means which he hath appointed whereby to bestow his grace and Spirit upon us ; so ought they to be absolutely believed by us, and that too before any other promises ; for all other suppose that we first believe in these, and so have them performed to us ; for unless we first believe and trust in God for grace to repent, and turn to him according to his promise, and accordingly do repent, and turn to him ; unless, I say, we first do this, we have no ground to expect the pardon of our sins, or any of the other blessings that he hath promised to us, because they are all promised to such only, who by their repentance and conversion are reconciled to God, and made really and truly his dutiful and obedient children by adoption and grace ; whereas if we by a firm and stedfast faith obtain these assistances of God's grace and Spirit which he hath promised, so as to repent, and become new creatures, then we may and ought to believe in him for whatsoever else he hath promised, and by consequence obtain it.

As for example ; the prophet saith, *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abun-*

dantly pardon, Isa. lv 7 Yea the Lord himself hath promised, saying, *Repent and turn yourselves from all transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin*, Ezek. xviii. 30. And *thus saith the Lord of hosts, Turn to me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn to you, saith the Lord of hosts*, Zech. i. 3. The whole Bible is full of such promises, where Almighty God hath engaged his word, *that if we repent of our sins and turn to him, he will pardon our sins and turn to us*. And therefore, as I have no ground to hope for the pardon of my sins except I do repent ; so I have all the reason in the world to believe, that if I do repent of my sins, they are all pardoned ; for I have the word of God himself for it, which if I stedfastly believe, it shall most certainly be accomplished to me ; my faith itself being the substance of this great mercy which I hope for at the hands of God, according to the promises which he hath made to mankind in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Hence therefore it is that the apostle so often saith, that we are justified by faith, and not by the works of the law ; no not by faith itself as it is a work, but as it is the substance of things hoped for For Christ having expiated our sins, by dying in our steads, God for his sake hath promised pardon and forgiveness to all those who repent and believe in him. And therefore if we repent of our sins, and believe in Christ for the pardon of them, according to God's promise, by this our faith, as it is the substance of what we hope for, we are interested or instated in all the merits of Christ's death and passion, which are thereby made over to us, and in a manner subsist in us. So that when we are said to be justified by faith, the meaning in brief is this, that we are justified by the merits of Christ, apprehended and made ours by faith, which is the substance of them as to us. So that if I believe aright in Christ, I am as certain to be pardoned and justified before God, as if I myself had made full satisfaction to God's justice for my sins ; for the satisfaction which Christ hath made

for them is by this means imputed to me and reckoned mine, which is the strongest ground we can have whereupon to build our hopes of pardon and salvation.

Now if we really believe and trust on these two sorts of promises which God hath made us, and by consequence have made them good to us, we cannot fail of whatsoever else he hath promised, that is really good for us; for Christ himself hath said, *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you*, Matt. vi. 33. From whence we may certainly conclude, that if we first seek the kingdom of God, so as to have his grace and Spirit to govern our hearts and affections for us, and his righteousness, so as to be justified by it, all things necessary for life and godliness shall be added to us. And having so plain and express a promise for it from Christ himself, as we have all the reason in the world to believe it, so if we believe it, we cannot but have it fully performed to us. For whatsoever good things we do or can hope for by virtue of this promise, our faith is the very substance of them all unto us. Insomuch, that by it, I am fully persuaded that whatsoever is or can be good for me, upon my performing the foresaid conditions, is really conferred upon me. Yea, I cannot but have them, seeing he who cannot lie hath promised them.

The same may be said also of the promises which are made to prayer. *Ask and ye shall have, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you*, Matt. vii. 7. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name. Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full*, John xvi. 23, 24. And again, *Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it*, John xiv. 13, 14. Having therefore so many and great promises made us by Christ himself, that we shall have whatsoever good thing we pray for in his name,

we have no cause to doubt of his performance of it ; and they that do so, have no ground to expect he should perform it. For this he himself makes the great condition upon which he will grant what we pray for, that we really believe he will do it for us. *Therefore*, saith he, *I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them*, Mark xi. 24. He doth not say, believe that ye shall receive them, but that you do receive them ; which plainly shews what kind of faith it is that he requires of us, even such a faith as is the very substance of the things we hope for, and gives a present being and subsistence to them. And if we thus believe that we do receive what we pray for, Christ here promiseth that we shall have it, otherwise not.

I shall give you only one instance more, whereby to shew you how faith is the substance of things hoped for ; and that shall be from the promises that God hath made us, that *they who repent and believe the Gospel, shall have eternal life*. As where our Lord saith, that *the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal*, Matt. xxv. 46. and so frequently elsewhere. Now he that rightly believes this, as no one can do, except he repent and believe the Gospel ; he, I say, that rightly believes this promise of eternal life, is as sure he shall have eternal life, as if he had it already : yea, so that in effect he already hath it. As our Lord himself assures us, saying, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth in him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life*, John v. 24. He doth not say, that he who thus believeth *shall* have, but that he *hath* everlasting life ; nor that he *shall* pass, but is *already passed* from death to life ; his faith being the very substance of it to him. As we find it was to St. Paul, saying, *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith ; henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righ-*

teousness, 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. By faith he looked upon it as laid up for him already. And so every one that truly believes the promise of eternal life, reckons it his own already, and by that means *hath*, as the apostle speaks, *eternal life abiding in him*, 1 John iii. 15.

And in this sense it is that our Saviour saith, *Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. And he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him*, John vi. 55, 56. Where eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ, is not to be understood in a corporeal sense, as if we eat his very body with our teeth, and drink the very blood that ran in his veins, as the papists absurdly imagine; but it is to be understood, as our Lord himself intimates, in a spiritual sense, that we feed upon him by faith. And whoso doth so, hath eternal life, and *Christ dwells in his heart by faith*, as the apostle speaks, Eph. iii. 17 His faith being the substance of the great things he hopes for whensoever he eateth the flesh and drinketh the blood of Christ.

And as faith is thus the substance of things hoped for, so it is the evidence of things not seen; as by it we enjoy what God hath promised, so by it we behold what he hath revealed to us, though never so much above our reason, or beyond our sight: whatsoever he hath recorded as done heretofore, whatsoever he hath foretold shall come to pass hereafter; whatsoever he hath asserted or propounded to us as a truth in his holy Scriptures, how remote soever it may seem to our sense or sight; by faith we are as certain of it, as if we saw it before our eyes; for faith, like a prospective, represents things afar off, as if they were just at hand; it regards not the distance of time, or place, nor the seeming impossibility of the thing propounded, but it respecteth the testimony of him who cannot lie, therefore only believing what he hath said, because he hath said it, and therefore it cannot but possess the soul with a fuller

conviction, a greater certainty, a deeper sense, a clearer evidence of what is so attested, than all other arguments and demonstrations in the world besides can do, whether they be drawn from sense or reason ; for our senses may deceive us, and so may our reason too ; but God is of that infinite wisdom, that it is impossible he should be deceived himself, and of that infinite truth and goodness, that it is as impossible he should deceive us ; and therefore our faith being grounded only upon his infallible testimony, cannot but create in us the highest evidence, and the strongest persuasion imaginable of what he hath so attested ; so that what the eye is to the body, that is faith to the soul, that whereby it seeth, or perceiveth whatsoever is presented to it in the word of God : by his faith Moses saw him that is *invisible*, Heb. xi. 27 that is, God, who is as clear and evident to the eye of faith, as he is invisible to that of sense: by this, as St. Paul saith, *we look not at the things which are seen, but at those things which are not seen*, 2 Cor. v. 18. which is the same in effect with that in my text ; *we walk not by sight, but by faith*. By this faith the patriarchs saw the promises afar off, and were so persuaded of them, that they embraced them, Heb. xi. 13.

Thus it was that Abraham saw Christ's day above two thousand years before it came, as Christ himself tells the Jews, saying, *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad*, John viii. 56. From whence it is plain, that his faith was as clear an evidence of what he did not see, as if he had really seen it, yea, so far, that the sight of it affected his heart with joy and gladness ; for he saw it, and was glad. Thus also it was that Moses saw Christ so plainly, that he esteemed *the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt ; for he had respect to the recompence of reward*, Heb. xi. 26. that is, by faith he looked upon Christ, and the great blessings procured by him, and saw them so clearly, that he preferred them

before all the treasures of Egypt, notwithstanding the reproach and troubles which attended them.

Thus it was that the prophet saw the nativity, the passion, the ascension of our blessed Saviour many ages before he came into the world; *Behold*, saith the prophet Isaiah, *a virgin hath conceived, and brought forth a Son*, as the Hebrew words signify, Isa. vii. 14. *For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given*, Isa. ix. 6. He speaks as if he had seen it done already, because foretold by God: and so for his passion, *He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed*, Isa. liii. 5. Where we see how his faith was so full an evidence of what Christ was to suffer afterwards, that he saw it as clearly as if Christ had suffered already in his very sight. After the same manner David speaks of the ascension, saying, *Thou hast ascended up on high, thou hast led captivity captive, and hast received gifts for men*, Psal. lxxiii. 18. As if he had been with the apostles when they saw Christ ascending into heaven.

Thus therefore we see how the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles and saints of old, were so fully persuaded of the truth and certainty of what God had revealed to them, that they were no less affected with it than with what they saw effected before their eyes, and so their faith was the evidence of things not seen unto them. And thus it is that we ought to act our faith in whatsoever we find recorded, foretold, or asserted in the word of God; which that you may the better understand, I shall give you some examples of it, in such things especially in which our faith ought to be continually exercised and employed.

First therefore, we know that *no man hath seen God at any time*, John i. 18. *for he*, as the apostle saith, *dwelleth in that light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see*, 1 Tim. vi. 16.

And the reason is, because with the eyes of our bodies we can see nothing but what is corporeal or bodily ; whereas Almighty God is a Spirit, a pure uncompounded Spirit, without body, parts, or passions, wisdom, light, glory, purity, perfection itself, and therefore infinitely beyond and above our sight ; but is he so as to our faith too ? Is he above or beyond that ? No surely ; for by faith I am as certain that he is, as that I myself am ; for unless he was, I could not be ; for, as the apostle saith, *it is in him we live and move and have our being*, Acts xvii. 28. Which being asserted in the word of God, and so made the object of my faith, I look upon myself at this time as subsisting in him, and depending upon him, not only for my being in general, but for my being here. It was by him I came, it is by him I am now here. And now I am here, it is only by him that I have either will or power to speak, insomuch that I am as sure it is only by him I speak, as I am that I speak at all ; and as sure that he hears what I say, as that I say it.

And thus wheresoever we are, whatsoever we do, we may still look upon God as still looking upon us, and taking special notice, not only of what we do or say, but also of what we think, desire, or will. Thus David acted his faith, saying, *O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and my up-rising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off ; thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence ?* Psal. cxxxix. 1, 2, 3, 5, 7 Thus by faith we may always see him that is invisible, and behold him not only as present with us, but as beholding of us, searching our very hearts and reins, and observing how we stand affected towards him, whether we love and fear him, whether we honour and obey him, or no.

The same may be said of the works of God. For though we see them now they are made by him, we did not see him make them. But by faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; and that *the things which are seen, were not made of things which do appear*, Heb. xi. 3. By faith we understand that God made all things of nothing, by his own almighty word, saying, *Let there be light, and there was light; Let there be a firmament, and it was so*; and so of the whole creation: which I am as fully persuaded of by faith, as if I had heard him speak the words.

And as by faith we understand how God made the world, so likewise how he governs, orders, and disposeth of all and every thing in it. For by faith we may see him, the first cause, holding, as it were, the chain of all inferior or secondary causes in his hand, ranging and managing them all, both severally and conjunctly, so as to make them accomplish his will and pleasure in the world. By faith we may see him over-ruling the counsels, and ordering the affairs of all the kingdoms and nations upon earth, stilling the raging of the sea, the noise of the waves, and the madness of the people. By faith we may behold him distributing the honours, and dispersing the riches of this world, as he himself sees good; advancing one, and depressing another; sometimes giving, and then taking away the blessings of this world, for reasons best known to himself; yea, by faith we may behold him interesting and concerning himself in the minutest things that are; *for are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father*. *But the very hairs of your head are all numbered*, Matt. x. 29, 30. And if he looks after the sparrows, and numbers the very hairs of our head, what is there in the world can be exempted from his care and providence? Nothing certainly; and therefore by faith we cannot but behold him moving in every thing that stirs, working in every thing that acts, influencing and disposing of every thing

that is, so as to make it conduce to his own glory ; and if we consider the great work of man's redemption, nothing can be so evident to our sense as that is to our faith, although accomplished many ages ago : it is true, we never saw Christ in the flesh, but by faith we are as fully persuaded of it, as they either were or could be that saw him and conversed with him every day ; for they trusted only to their eyes, whereas we have the infallible word of God himself for the ground of our faith and confidence ; so that the wise men and the shepherds who saw Christ in the manger, could not be so confident they saw him there, as we are or may be that he was there ; for they beheld him with their eyes, we by our faith in God. The same holds good as to every thing else that is recorded of our blessed Saviour in the holy Gospels ; insomuch, that by faith methinks I see him going about doing good, healing the sick, opening the eyes of the blind, and the ears of the deaf, walking upon the water, rebuking the winds, dispossessing evil spirits, preaching the Gospel, and raising the dead to life. Methinks I see him afterwards in the garden prostrate upon the ground, and hear him crying out, *Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me ; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.* Methinks I see him soon after that apprehended, haled from one judgment-seat to another, accused, arraigned, condemned, buffeted, spit upon, crowned with thorns, and afterwards crucified between two thieves. Methinks I see him hanging upon the cross, and there undergoing all that shame, that pain, that wrath and fury which was due to me, and so taking away the sin of the world in general, and mine in particular. Methinks I see him laid in the grave, and the third day after rising up again, and appearing to his disciples, discoursing with them, and convincing them that it was he indeed. Methinks I see the holes which the nails have made in his hands and feet, and which the spear had made in his side ; methinks I see them as plainly as St. Thomas himself,

when he thrust his fingers into them. Lastly, methinks I see him ascending up to heaven, and there standing on the right hand of God, as clearly, as evidently as St. Stephen himself did it, when the heavens were opened to make way for that blessed sight; for these things being revealed by Almighty God, I cannot but as stedfastly believe them, as if I had really seen them, and more stedfastly too, as having a more sure ground to build my faith upon, which as it is the evidence of things not seen, hath a greater blessing entailed upon it by him who hath purchased all blessings for us, saying to the disciple that would not believe until he had seen, *Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed*, John xx. 29. Moreover, none of us, I suppose, ever yet saw an angel or spirit, either good or bad; yet by faith we cannot but be as fully persuaded there are such creatures in the world, as that we ourselves are in it. For as for the evil angels, which we call devils, it is expressly said of them, that *the angels which kept not their first estate, but lost their own habitation, God hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day*, Jude 6. *Yet so as that they go about like a roaring lion, seeking whom they may devour*, or whom God will give them leave to devour, 1 Pet. v. 8. What therefore though we never saw such creatures with our eyes; who can believe the word of God, and yet doubt whether there be such creatures in the world, seeing the word of God which he believes hath so plainly asserted that there are? Men may profess what they please, but if they question this, they do not believe the Scriptures; for if they did, the existence of such spirits would be as clear to their faith, as the existence of bodies is to their senses. For by faith we may see the devil always about us, tempting us to all manner of vice and wickedness; and to this among the rest, even not to believe that he tempts us at all, nor to think there is any such creature

in the world to do it. They that doubt of this, have much more cause to suspect their own faith than the devil's existence.

And then as for the holy angels, we find them frequently employed by Almighty God in the affairs of this world, and especially about our blessed Saviour, while he was upon the earth; and for his sake about all those who are his disciples; for, as the apostle saith, *are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?* Heb. i. 14. And the Psalmist, speaking to him that truly fears and trusts on God, *He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone,* Psal. xci. 11. There are many passages in Scripture to this purpose, from whence we are as fully assured there are angels in the world, as that there are men, and that they are ready upon all occasions to relieve, succour, and assist all such as truly fear and serve God, according to the orders they have received from God himself for that purpose. As we see in that remarkable story about the prophet Elisha; for when the Syrians had encompassed the city Dothan, where the prophet was, with horses and chariots; the prophet's servant, being much affrighted at it, cried out, *Alas, master, what shall we do?* To whom the prophet answered, *Fear not, for they that be with us, are more than they that be with them.* And then he prayed to the Lord that his servant's eyes might be opened; which was no sooner done, but he saw, *and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha,* 2 Kings vi. 14, 17. It seems there were several legions of the holy angels come down to defend him, which the prophet being strong in faith saw, though his servant could not: as appears from his saying, *there are more that be with us, than that be with them.* And the servant too, his eyes, even the eyes of his soul, were no sooner opened, but he presently saw the army of angels

as plainly as he had before seen that of the Syrians. And so may we by faith continually behold the angel of the Lord, as the Psalmist assures us, *encamping about them that fear him, and delivering them*, Psal. xxxiv. 7 insomuch that so long as we continue in the true fear of God, and make it our business to serve and honour him as the angels do, we may by faith behold them as ready to keep us out of danger, as either men or devils are to bring us into it; as ready to defend and protect us, as our enemies can be to assault or trouble us. And though we can never see them with our bodily eyes, except they assume, as they sometimes do, a bodily shape; yet they are always as evident to our faith, as any thing is or can be to our sight. Or rather faith itself is the very evidence of them to us, so that by it we may as plainly perceive their presence with us, and the service they continually do us, as if they appeared visibly to us, as they sometimes did to the saints of old; yea and more plainly too; forasmuch as we have more cause to believe the word of God, than we have to believe our own eyes.

The next instance I shall give you to shew how faith is the evidence of things not seen, shall be taken from the resurrection of the dead and the general judgment of the last day. Concerning which our Saviour himself saith, *that he will come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, and will send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other*, Matt. xxiv. 31, 32. *And when the Son of man shall thus come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations*, Matt. xxv. 31, 32. *And then, as the apostle tells us, we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or evil*, 2 Cor. v. 10. Having therefore so sure

a word of prophecy, what is there in the whole world that we can be more assured of than we are of this, that we shall one day stand before Christ's tribunal, and receive our last and final sentence from him? For hath he said it, and shall it not come to pass? It is impossible. Insomuch that having Christ's word for it, and believing stedfastly in him, I am as certain that we shall all one day stand before his judgment-seat, as I am that we are now in this place: as certain that we shall one day rise from the dead, as I am that we are now alive: as certain that he will then pass sentence upon us, as I am that he ever said he would do it. So that by faith, methinks, I always hear the trumpet sounding in mine ears, *Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment*, and see all mankind immediately gathered together, and myself among the rest, to receive our doom from the Judge of heaven and earth. Methinks I hear him saying to some, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*: and to others, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*, Matt. xxv. 34, 41. For these things being foretold by Christ himself, my faith represents them as clearly to me, as if I saw them with my eyes, and heard them with my ears at this very moment.

And so it doth the places too, whither both these sorts of persons are sent, and which our Lord speaks of in the following words, saying, *And these, even the wicked, shall go into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal*, ver. 46. For what though we never saw hell, (and God grant we never may,) yet having it so exactly described to us in the word of God, by faith we cannot but behold so much of it as to make us dread the thoughts of our ever coming there, *for it is a place*, as our Lord tells us, *of utter darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth*, Matt. viii. 12. *where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*, Mark ix. 44. that is, where their consciences are always

gnawed and tormented with the remembrance of their former sins and follies, and the fire of God's wrath is continually burning in their breasts, never to be quenched or abated ; from whence by faith we may easily perceive what a doleful condition these poor souls are in, which are now there : what grief, what horror and confusion are they now overwhelmed withal, for the pride and luxury, the intemperance and debauchery, and for all the other vices which they once took pleasure in ? How are their minds racked, and their whole souls tortured, with the thoughts of their refusing or neglecting those means of grace and salvation which were once offered to them ? What wrath and fury is now poured out upon them for their transgressing the laws, affronting the majesty, dishonouring the name, and abusing the mercies of Almighty God ? What quick, what deep apprehensions have they of his vengeance and indignation against them ? Methinks I see him looking upon them, and miening himself as angry with them ; and them too looking up to him, but not able to see any thing but frowns and justice in him ; the believing thoughts whereof is a terror to me ; but what then is the sense and feeling of it unto them ? certainly far more terrible than we can either think or believe it to be.

But this is too sad and doleful a place for our faith itself to dwell in long ; and therefore let us raise it up to take a view of those celestial mansions, where those that die in the Lord Jesus live with him for ever : where by faith we may set ourselves just by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, yea by our Lord himself, and behold him in all his glory. What a blessed company of glorious saints are there ! The spirits of just men made perfect ! How cheerful do they look, how happily do they live, how pleasant are they in their conversation one with another ; how free are they from care, how full of love and joy, of grace and goodness, and of every thing that can ever be desired to make men happy ! By faith we may behold them as St. John did, *all clothed in white, with palms*

*in their hands, and crowns upon their heads, sometimes falling down and worshipping, and then praising and magnifying the most high God, and singing Hallelujah to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for evermore ; yea, by faith we may behold Almighty God himself, the chiefest, the only good, smiling upon them, rejoicing over them, and manifesting himself as reconciled to them, and well-pleased with them, the sight and apprehensions whereof cannot but ravish and transport their hearts into the highest raptures and ecstasies of joy and praise, and thankfulness for so great, so infinite a favour as that is : all this, and infinitely more than I am able to express, my faith plainly represents unto me, whensoever it fixes itself in heaven, which may justly make us every one cry out with the Psalmist, *O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest* : then I would get above this silly and deceitful world, and take my fill of those joys and pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore ; where they that sleep in the Lord Jesus, enjoy perpetual rest and felicity in him. And though we be not so happy yet as to be with them, yet by faith we may behold what they enjoy, and in a great measure enjoy it ourselves too ; at least so much of it, as to make us long for that blessed time, when our hope shall be turned into vision, and our faith into the fruition of these celestial joys, which the Son of God, in whom we believe, hath purchased for us with his own blood.*

SERMON XLII.

FAITH IN GOD AND CHRIST, A SOVEREIGN REMEDY
AGAINST ALL TROUBLES.

JOHN xiv. 1

*Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God,
believe also in me.*

BEHOLD here the love and care that our great Master had of his scholars and disciples; he did not love to see their heads hang down, their countenances sad, their eyes bedewed with tears, nor their hearts oppressed with grief and sadness for any thing, no, not for his own departure from them, which was certainly one of the greatest troubles that could befall them; he had told them in the foregoing chapter, that he must now leave them, and go to a place where they could not as yet come; and perceiving them to be much troubled at it, he cheers them up, bids them be of good comfort; *Let not your heart be troubled*, saith he; *ye believe in God, believe also in me*; and so directs them what to do, that they may keep their hearts from being troubled at any thing in the world; for though their sorrow for his departure gave him the opportunity of speaking these words, yet he did not intend them only for that particular occasion, and therefore takes no notice at all of it, but expresseth himself in general terms, *Let not your heart be troubled*, and so signifies his will and pleasure to us, that whatsoever troubles we meet with in the world, yet he would not have them come near our hearts, so as to disturb and discompose them, but that we take all the care we

can to keep our hearts free from all manner of disquiet and perturbation at any things that happen in the world, that so we may be always in a fit temper to serve and honour him that made and governs it, with cheerfulness and alacrity of mind, which he therefore requires of us, and so makes it our duty, saying, *Let not your heart be troubled*; yours who are my friends and disciples, who profess to love me, and to obey me; I speak to you, not to others, for all others not only may, but ought to be troubled in heart, and must be so before they can come to me for rest; and indeed they have all the reason in the world to be troubled at every thing, because every thing is accursed to them; but as for you, let not your heart be troubled at any thing, *ye believe in God*, and therefore need not be troubled; but that ye may not be so, *believe also in me*.

Where we may observe, that our blessed Saviour, the great Physician of souls, prescribes faith in God, and in himself, as the most sovereign antidote to preserve our hearts from being troubled, and the best physic to cure them when they are so; and hath left it upon record as a general rule for all Christians to observe, at all times, in all places, in all conditions and circumstances of life, that whatsoever happens, they still act their faith aright, and by that means keep their hearts from being troubled; but for that purpose they must not only believe in God, but in Christ too, not as if Christ was not God, for if he was not God, we could not be obliged to believe in him; or rather, we should be obliged not to believe in him; this being one of those duties or religious acts which are proper and peculiar only to God himself, and therefore not to be communicated to any creature; so that our Saviour commanding us to believe in him as well as God, doth plainly intimate to us, that he himself also is God, otherwise he would never have required so great an act of divine worship as faith is to be performed to himself in the same manner as it is performed to God, saying, *Ye believe in God, believe also in me*.

But why then doth he require us to believe particu-

larly in him, when as he being God, whosoever believes in God, must needs believe in him, who is so? To understand this, we may observe, that our Saviour doth not say, ye believe in the Father, believe also in me. If he had expressed himself after that manner, he would have thereby required us only to believe in him the Son as such, as well as in the Father, according to what he himself elsewhere saith, *that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father*, John v. 23. and so would have signified no more, than that the Father and the Son being both of the same divine nature, we ought to believe in both alike. But our Saviour doth not say, ye believe in the Father, but ye believe in God, or believe ye in God, believe also in me, and so propounds himself to be the object of our faith, not only as God the Creator and Governor of the world, but likewise as God-man, and so the Saviour and Redeemer of mankind, who was now ready to offer up himself as a sacrifice for their sins, and then to go to heaven to prepare a place for them there, as he tells his disciples in the following verse; and so directs us to the most infallible remedy against all manner of troubles, both temporal and spiritual: from all temporal troubles, by believing in that infinitely wise, and good, and powerful God, that governs the world; and from all spiritual troubles, by believing in him our almighty and all-sufficient Saviour, *who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them*, Heb. vii. 25. According to which method therefore I shall first shew, that believing in God is the most effectual means to preserve our hearts from being overwhelmed with any outward calamity that may befall us in this world; and then, that believing Christ is the surest way to fortify our hearts against those inward troubles, which are so apt to assault and molest us whilst we are in our imperfect state here below.

As for the first, our Lord here supposeth, or rather

taketh it for granted, that we shall meet with troubles in the world, according to what he elsewhere tells his disciples, saying, *In the world ye shall have tribulation*, John xvi. 33. which is generally true, not only of Christ's disciples, but of all mankind. All mankind are guilty of sin, and therefore cannot but be continually subject to the troubles which attend it. *Man is born to trouble*, saith Job, *as the sparks fly upwards*, Job v. 7. It is not more natural for sparks to fly up into the air, than for man to fall down into trouble, of one kind or other; yea, as Job again observes, *Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble*, Job xiv. 1. Though his life be short, it is very troublesome, there being no place, no time, no calling, no condition of life, that a man can be in, but he finds some inconvenience, some trouble or other in it. Insomuch, that though no man hath all troubles, all have some: even they also who may seem to others to have the fewest, yet really they have the most and greatest of all. But there never yet was, nor ever will be, a man upon the face of the earth that always was or will be perfectly free from trouble, of one sort or other; some are troubled in their minds with melancholy and dismal thoughts and fears, when they have, perhaps, no real cause for it. Others are troubled in their bodies with pain or sickness, or loss of limbs, or the want of their senses, as their hearing, or seeing, or smelling, or the like. Some cannot speak at all, others so imperfectly, that they can scarce be understood. And they who enjoy health and soundness both of mind and body, yet are often troubled about their estates; some are troubled to get wherewith to live and maintain their families, others are as much troubled to keep and manage what they have gotten; and yet, after all their care and diligence, sustain great losses either at sea, or by bad debts, or law-suits, or by the knavery and cheating of those they deal with, or else by their own relations or servants.

Some are troubled for want of children, others are

troubled with those they have, as being foolish, or distracted, or sickly, or maimed, or defective in their senses, or extravagant, or idle, or undutiful either to God or to them.

Some are troubled at the frowns of their superiors, others at the scoffs of their neighbours; some at their own private, others at the public affairs; some at home, others abroad; some in prison, others in slavery; some with the loss of life, others with the fears of it; and so some are troubled with one thing, some with another, but every one with one thing or other.

For the proof of this, I dare appeal to the experience of all mankind, and to yours particularly, who are here assembled, there not being, I believe, one person among us, who hath not his troubles as well as sins, of one kind or other; yea, our blessed Saviour himself, who knew no sin of his own, yet having taken ours upon him, was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; but it was for us that he was troubled, and therefore he would not have us to be troubled too, but directs us how to preserve our hearts from being touched with any of the troubles that befall us here below, even by believing in God, saying, *Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God*, or, as the word may be rendered, *believe ye in God, the all-knowing, all-wise, all-mighty, all good and gracious Preserver, Governor, and Disposer of all things in the world, so as to trust and rely upon him, to prevent the troubles you fear, remove those you feel, to bless and sanctify them to you, or to give you so much strength to bear them, that they may seem light and easy to you, that so your hearts may not be discomposed, much less overwhelmed with them.* And verily, could we always thus believe in God, whatsoever happens in the world, we should never be much troubled at it; for amidst all the changes and chances of this mortal life, our hearts would still be fixed, trusting in the Lord: for which purpose therefore, whensoever ye find your hearts begin to be troubled at any thing

which befalls you, lift them up immediately unto God, and believe,

First, that it comes from him, at least not without his permission and providence, who orders and overrules not only the great affairs of kingdoms and empires, but the private concerns also of every particular person in them, with all and every circumstance thereof; inso-much, that there is not the least thing imaginable can happen to any man, but if he looks narrowly into it, he may see the hand of God in it, and then must needs rest fully satisfied with it.

This is that great lesson which Christ our master taught his disciples, and which he taught them to make use of too upon such occasions, even whensoever they found their hearts troubled with the fear of their potent and malicious enemies, saying, *Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell; and then he adds, Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father; but the very hairs of your head are all numbered: fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows*, Matt. x. 28, 29, 30, 31 As if he should have said, You see a multitude of sparrows, and such like inconsiderable birds flying about in the air, and yet not so much as one of them can be killed, and so fall to the ground without your Father's leave; but every one of you is of much more value with God, than many of them; for he is your Father, and looks upon you not only as his creatures, but his children too, and takes care of you accordingly; and therefore ye may be confident that you can never fall to the ground, nor any thing befall you against your heavenly Father's will, who numbers the very hairs of your heads, so that not so much as one of them can be touched without his leave; what need you then fear what man can do unto you, who can do nothing to you but what your Father gives them leave to do; and he

be sure will give them leave to do nothing, but what is really for your good ?

This is, in short, what our blessed Saviour intends of this divine discourse ; from whence we may positively affirm, that there is not the least thing that happens in the world, but what is managed by the steady hand of divine Providence, and whosoever may be the instruments of secondary, God himself is the first cause of it ; which whosoever firmly believes, as all Christians must do, can never be troubled at any thing that befalls, as always seeing his heavenly Father's hand in it, as we see in old Eli ; when Samuel had told him from God, that his house and family should be destroyed ; he, considering whence the message came, was so far from being troubled, that he submitted himself wholly to him, saying, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good*, 1 Sam. iii. 18. Thus when Shimei cursed David, David considering that whatsoever malice Shimei bare him in his heart, he could not have vented it so without God's leave, he bare it patiently, saying, *The Lord hath said unto him, Curse David: who then shall say, Wherefore hast thou done so ?* 2 Sam. xvi. 10. And whosoever thus looks upon every thing which comes to pass, as coming from God, and believes it to be his will, how grievous soever at first sight it may seem unto him, when he recollects himself, he will be so far from being troubled at it, or repining against it, that he will say with David in another case, *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou, O Lord, didst it*, Psal. xxxix. 9. For he that believes that God doth a thing, cannot but at the same time believe it to be well done, yea the best that could be ; and therefore cannot in reason or conscience be troubled at it, but must rather acquiesce in it, as believing it to come from him who knows what is fit and proper to be done, infinitely better than he doth.

And this is the next thing which we must believe concerning God, in order to the keeping our hearts from

being troubled. We must believe him to be omniscient, that he knows all and every thing that is thought, or spoke, or done ; every thing that lives, or moves, or hath any being ; every thing that is in the whole world. Neither is there any creature, as the apostle saith, that is not manifest in his sight, *but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him, with whom we have to do*, Heb. iv. 13. He knows what all the angels are doing in heaven, what all the devils are contriving in hell, and what all their agents are acting upon earth. He knows the several inclinations and qualities, the virtues and the vices of every creature, together with the tendencies and consequences of all events ; what will do us good, and what hurt, and how and when it will do so. He knows what enemies all and every one of us have in the world, what hatred they bear, and what mischief they design against us, and which is the best or the only way to prevent it. He knows the temper and complexion of our bodies, the several dispositions of our minds, and the respective circumstances of our lives, and how to suit his providences to us, and to make them fit and proper for us. In short, he knows every thing that is in us, every thing that is about us, every thing that concerns us, or hath any relation to us. Insomuch, that although many things may happen to us, otherwise than we expected, yet the best friend that we have in the world foresees and orders them all for us ; and therefore what reason have we to trouble our heads or our hearts about any thing that may or may not befall us, seeing we have such an infinitely wise and knowing Father to take care of us, and of all our concerns ? and if we believe in him, will most certainly do it.

Neither is he less able than he is willing to prevent any evil we fear, to remove what we feel, or to change the nature of it, and make it really good for us ; for he, as the first and supreme cause, holds the chain of all inferior and secondary causes always in his own hand, ranging and managing all and every one of them as

seemeth best to him : so that all the powers in heaven and hell, and on earth, are equally subject unto him, and he makes them do his will, howsoever contrary it may be to their own ; as the Wiseman saith, *The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water ; he turneth it whithersoever he will*, Prov. xxi. 1. And so are the hearts of all the men in the world as much under the power as they are always under the eye of God, who winds and turns them so, that whatsoever they design, they can bring nothing to pass without him, nor any thing but what he will, as the Wiseman again observes, *There are many devices in man's heart ; nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord that shall stand*, Prov. xix. 21 And therefore, what need we fear any or all the creatures in the world, although they should set themselves in array against us, seeing there is one above them, who can abate their pride, assuage their malice, infatuate their counsels, confound their devices, and make them fall into the same net which they lay for others, and cause that which they design for our ruin, to be the most effectual means of our peace and welfare ; and so produce our good out of the very mischief that was intended for us ? As we see in the history of Joseph ; for his brethren having, out of their envy and malice against him, sold him to the Ishmaelites, to live in perpetual slavery as they thought and intended, hoping never to hear any more of him ; God was pleased so to order it in his providence, that this very thing proved the occasion of his being advanced not only above all the subjects of Egypt, but above his very brethren too that sold him ; so that they were forced to bow and cringe to him, and lay at his mercy, not only for their livelihood, but for their very lives too, which he could have taken away when he pleased. Thus God was pleased to manifest his love unto him, in the hatred which his brethren bare him, and to make use of the mischief which they designed him, as a means of promoting him to the greatest glory and grandeur he could

ever have in this world. The like may be observed in many other both sacred and ecclesiastical histories : especially where the church itself hath been concerned, which hath always grown and flourished most under the straits and troubles that have fallen upon it ; which its enemies have designed for its destruction, but God hath still blessed and sanctified them to its greater increase and glory. Yea there is no particular person that truly loves and honours God, but may take notice of the same in his own private affairs : even that all the losses, crosses, and disappointments that he ever suffered, all the distresses and afflictions of any sort that the devil or man have brought upon him, have, by the secret working of God, contributed something either to his temporal or spiritual good and welfare. This St. Paul observes and asserts, not only upon his own, but upon the knowledge and experience of all the saints, saying, *We know that all things work together for good, to them who love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*, Rom. viii. 28.

He that believes this, how can his heart be troubled at any thing ? What ' troubled for that which a man believes to be the will of God ? Troubled for that which he believes is for his good ? Troubled for that now, which he shall have cause to thank God for unto all eternity ? It cannot be ; no man can believe in God, and yet be troubled at the same time for what he doth ; for our very believing that he doth it, and that he doth it for our good, must needs fill our hearts with so much joy and comfort, that there will be no room for grief or trouble there.

Wherefore, as ever we desire to keep our hearts from being tossed to and fro with the storms and tempests we meet with here below, we must be sure to keep our faith continually fixed upon God, according as our Saviour here directs us. But for that purpose as we believe in God, so we must believe in Christ too, for whose sake alone it is that God is thus good to us, as

to make all things good for us ; and therefore he adds, *believe also in me*, that so we may know from whence all our mercies flow, and how to obtain them, even by believing and trusting on him who hath purchased them for us with his own blood, and who therefore never denies them to any that hope and trust on him for them.

Let us therefore now put our whole trust and confidence in Almighty God, and in our blessed Saviour, to protect us from all evil, and to give us whatsoever he knows to be good for us ; and then we shall be sure that he will do it ; for he never yet did, nor ever will fail them that trust and depend upon him. Thus David asserts and promises in the name of God, Psal. xxxvii. 40. xxxiv. 22. cxxv. 1, 2. and Jehosaphat experienced, 2 Chron. xx. 12. and Jeremiah the prophet, Jer xxxix. 17, 18. Yea, this hath been the constant experience of all the saints that ever lived ; and therefore let us but live as becometh saints, and trust in God as they do, and we also shall find it true by our own experience as they did. Whatsoever happens in the world, let our hearts be always fixed, trusting in the Lord, and then no trouble will come near them, but we shall always experience the certainty of that method which our Lord prescribes to keep our hearts from being troubled. But there is another sort of trouble which Christ's own disciples, real and true Christians, are apt to fall into, even inward or spiritual troubles, arising from the remembrance of their former sins, from a sense of their present infirmities, from the strength of the devil's temptations, or else from the consideration of the unworthiness and imperfection of their best duties. All which I confess are real causes of trouble, yea of such troubles, as would certainly break our hearts in pieces, if they were not defended by faith in Christ : but by faith in Christ our hearts may be defended even from such troubles as those, so that we shall be affected no further with them, than it is necessary we should be, towards our exercise and growth in grace.

For first, as to the remembrance of our former sins, it cannot, I confess, but be grievous to us, although we have now repented of them, and utterly forsaken them ; for do what we can, they will sometime come into our minds, and present themselves in all their dismal colours before our eyes, as we see in David, saying, *I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me*, Psal. li. 3. And in Job, saying to God, *for thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth*, Job xiii. 26. Though his sins were committed many years before, in his very youth, yet he still felt the bitterness of them, and his soul was filled with as much grief and sorrow for them, as if he had but newly committed, and had not as yet repented of them. Thus St. Paul, after he was become one of the greatest saints upon earth, still looked upon himself as the chiefest of all sinners, by reason of the many and horrid crimes he had been guilty of before his conversion, which being still fresh in his mind and memory, he could not but condemn and abhor himself for them as long as he lived.

I suppose there are many here present, who have found the same by their own experience, even all who are touched with so quick a sense of your former sins and follies, that you have truly repented of them. Do what you can, they will sometime come into your thoughts, and vex and grieve you to the heart ; though they were committed twenty, or thirty, or forty years ago, it is all one, they shall lie at the door of your consciences, ready upon all occasions to assault and trouble you, as much as if they had been committed but yesterday : they were once sweet to your taste, but now they are bitter to your souls. Oh ! the gall and the wormwood, the grief and anguish you now feel, when you call to mind your former folly and madness in breaking so righteous a law, and in displeasing so great a God, and so gracious a Father, as you have done ? How doth it cut you to the heart, that you should ever

offend him, who gives you your very life and being, and all the good things you do enjoy? that you have been guilty of such crimes which nothing less than the blood of God could expiate? and have lived in those sins, for which the best friend you have in the world died? How are your hearts grieved, and your souls ready to be overwhelmed with horror and despair at the remembrance of it, so as to say with David, *There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger, O Lord; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sins: for mine iniquities are gone over my head as an heavy burden, too heavy for me to bear*, Psal. xxxiv. 3, 4.

But let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Jesus Christ. As ye remember what you have done, remember also what he hath suffered: what he hath suffered for those very sins which you remember you once committed; as verily as you believe yourselves to be guilty of such sins, believe likewise that Christ hath undergone all the shame, and pain, and punishment which was due unto you for them: that he, by the one oblation of himself, made complete satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, and for yours amongst the rest. *That he was wounded for your transgressions, and bruised for your iniquities; that the chastisement of your peace was laid upon him, that by his stripes you might be healed*, Isa. liii. 5. *That he was made sin for you, that you might be made the righteousness of God in him*, 2 Cor. v. 21. *That he was delivered for your offences, and raised again for your justification*, Rom. iv. 25. That he loved you, and gave himself for you, and therefore calls upon you, saying, *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*, Matt. xi. 28. You labour under the weight, you are heavy laden with the burden of your sins, and if you do but go to Christ, by a quick and lively faith in him, he will ease you of your burden, and give rest and quiet to your souls: he will

wash you from your iniquities, and cleanse you from your sins in his own blood ; and will say to you as he did to the man in the Gospel, *Be of good comfort, my son, thy sins are all pardoned.*

And verily this is not only the greatest, but the only effectual remedy in the world for a wounded conscience, insomuch that it is impossible for any one, who is truly sensible of his sins, to keep his heart from sinking down into despair at the remembrance of them, without a firm belief that the eternal Son of God hath suffered for them : and therefore St. John prescribes no other receipt in this case, but only this, saying, *If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous ; and he is the propitiation for our sins ; and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world,* 1 John ii. 1, 2. As if he had said, If any of you be guilty of some notorious sin, for which God may justly inflict the severest of his judgments upon you, yet do not despair of his mercy, but remember that we have an Advocate always ready to plead our cause in heaven, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them : and he may well do it, having offered up himself as a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of mankind in general, and for yours particularly ; and therefore do but repent of what you have done, resolve to do so no more, but for the future according to the rules that he hath set you, and then you may and ought to believe in Christ for the pardon and forgiveness of all your former sins, so as to be fully persuaded in your minds, that God for his sake hath, and will discharge and absolve you from all the guilt you had contracted by them, and is now as perfectly reconciled to you, as if he had never been displeased with you ; and therefore let not your hearts be troubled ; ye believe in God, believe also in Jesus Christ.

But you will say, perhaps, it is true indeed, Christ being both God and man, his death could not but be of

infinite value, and therefore a sufficient sacrifice for the sins of all the world ; but it is as true likewise, that none are actually pardoned by it, but only such as sincerely repent and turn to God, so as to avoid and mortify their sins, and walk for the future *in newness of life* ; whereas, we find by woful experience, that we have no power in ourselves at all to do it. We are not sufficient of ourselves so much as to think any thing as of ourselves, much less to do any thing that is good ; *but when we would do good, evil is present with us. Though we delight in the law of God after the inward man, we see another law in our members warring against the law of our minds, and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin, which is in our members*, Rom. vii. 22, 23. By which means, though we set ourselves against our sins, we cannot overcome them, but are often overcome by them. Though we desire and endeavour to serve and obey God, according as he hath commanded us, we cannot do it ; we strive to walk uprightly in his holy ways, but we are so very weak and infirm in our inward man, that do what we can, we often stumble and fall ; either doing what we ought not, or else not doing what we ought, at least not so as we ought to do it : how then can we expect that God should have mercy upon us, who are thus conscious to ourselves, that we have not only sinned heretofore, but do so still ? How can we expect pardon, even for Christ's sake, when we are not able of ourselves to perform the conditions upon which it is promised ! This is that which afflicts and confounds our souls, and fills them with unspeakable grief and horror, that God hath provided us such an all-sufficient Saviour, and yet we, by reason of the weakness of our depraved nature, cannot go unto him, nor come up to those easy terms, which he hath propounded in order to the pardon of our sins by the merits of his death and passion. This is that which makes us cry out in the bitterness of our souls, as St. Paul did, *O wretched*

men that we are, who shall deliver us from the body of this death that is within us ! Rom. vii. 24.

But let not your hearts be troubled ; ye believe in God, believe also in Christ, who is able not only to pardon your sins when ye have repented, but to give you repentance too, that so they may be pardoned. *For he is exalted with the right hand of God to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins,* Acts v. 31. They are both now at his disposal : repentance, as he is a Prince ; and forgiveness, as he is a Saviour. As he is a Saviour, he can save us from the wrath of God which is due unto our sins, and so forgive them, so soon as we have repented of them. As he is a Prince, that hath all power committed to him both in heaven and earth, he can enable us to repent, so as that our sins may be forgiven. What then if ye can do nothing of yourselves ? What is there ye may not do, by his assistance who can do all things ; and who is always ready to enable you to do whatsoever is required of you, if ye do but believe and depend upon him for it, inso-much that by the continual exercise of your faith in him, you may continually derive that grace and virtue from him, whereby you may be enabled not only to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, but likewise to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, and so both learn and practise all that the Gospel teaches and requires of you in order to your pardon ? Tit. ii. 12. This St. Paul found by experience, and therefore confidently asserts it, saying, *I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be contented. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound : every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need : I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me,* Phil. iv. 11, 12, 13. And if you do but believe in Christ, as St. Paul did, you may have the same experience as he had, so as to be able to say, that though you

can do nothing without Christ, there is nothing but you can do by him : by him you may overcome the world, by him you may mortify all your earthly members, by him you may *work out your salvation with fear and trembling*, by him you may *make your calling and election sure* ; for by him you may walk in all the *commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless* ; and therefore, let not your hearts be troubled at the consideration of your natural infirmities, but believe in Christ, apply yourselves to him, and he will soon afford you such assistances of his own grace and Holy Spirit, whereby your hearts shall be set to obey God's commandments, and to do all such good works as he hath prepared for you to walk in, notwithstanding your own natural corruptions, or the temptations of the devil himself ; I say, notwithstanding the temptations of the devil himself, which are often very strong and violent ; *for he being cast out of heaven, walks about, seeking whom he may devour*, 1 Pet. v. 8. And if he can delight in any thing, it is in doing mischief, wheresoever he comes, to mankind, and in bringing them, if it be possible, into the same estate of misery and torment with himself ; for which purpose, being full of subtlety as well as malice, he takes particular notice of every one's temper, his condition, and the several circumstances of his life, and suits his temptations accordingly ; so long as men go on in their sins, he lets them alone, as being hitherto sure of them ; but when he sees them once begin to look towards heaven, and endeavour to obtain that happiness which he hath lost, then he bestirs himself, and sets with all his might and main upon them, striving all he can to bring them back into their former sins, or else to seduce them into some damnable heresy, or else into some superstitious way of living ; that so they may take up with the shadow instead of the substance of religion ; and if none of these things will do, but he sees them still resolved to live in the true faith and fear of God, and so walk directly in the way to bliss, then he endeavours to obstruct, or at least disturb them in their

course, he works upon the humours of their bodies, whereby to affect their minds; he raiseth mists before their eyes, that they may not look upon things in their proper colours; he corrupts their fancies, so as to make all things seem black and melancholy to them; he interrupts and distracts them in their duties; he suggests sometimes unclean, sometimes profane, sometimes blasphemous and atheistical thoughts into their minds, and all to make their lives useless and unserviceable to God, or at least uneasy and uncomfortable to themselves, as many here present, I believe, have found by their woful experience, by which means you are always full of fears and doubts about your spiritual estate, and are so mightily troubled and discomposed in your minds, that you expect every day to be overcome by this your potent and malicious adversary, and to be carried captive by him at his will.

But let not your hearts be troubled; *ye believe in God, believe also in Jesus Christ*, who is infinitely more above the devil in knowledge and power, than you are below him; do but believe and trust on him, and the *gates of hell shall never prevail against you*; but whatsoever temptations fall upon you, he will make way for your escape. This we learn from his own mouth, where he saith to St. Peter, *Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren*, Luke xxii. 31, 32. From whence we may observe, that the devil could do St. Peter no hurt, unless his faith failed; that our Lord had taken care that his faith should not fail, and, by consequence, that the devil should no way hurt him; as he afterwards found by experience: and therefore the same apostle directs all Christians to take the same course whensoever they are tempted; for having acquainted them that the devil goes about *seeking whom he may devour*, he adds, *whom resist, stedfast in the faith*, 1 Pet. v. 9. Implying, that so long as they continued stedfast in the faith of Christ, all the power of

hell could never prevail against them, and that is the reason why St. Paul calls it the shield of faith, because by it we are *able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked*, Eph. vi. 16.

Now that faith which is thus prevalent against the devil is not only a belief that the Gospel is true in general, but a firm trust and confidence in our blessed Saviour to save and defend us from our *ghostly enemies*, which he will certainly do if we thus believe in him, and apply ourselves to him to do it for us ; as we see in that remarkable instance of St. Paul, who when he was buffeted by a messenger of Satan, *for this thing*, saith he, *I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me ; and he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness*, 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9. Where we may observe, how ready our Lord was to assist him : and that he did it most effectually, appears from the following words, where the apostle saith, *Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me*. He was so far from sinking under the sense of his infirmities, that he gloried in them, as being the occasion of his receiving more power from Christ, than he could ever have had from himself in his best estate.

And none of you but may find the same by your own experience, if you will but take the same course ; whensoever you are assaulted with any sort of temptations whatsoever, be not disheartened at them ; let not your hearts be troubled, but believe in Christ, act your trust and confidence on him, and he will soon either make the tempter to flee from you, or else put such power into you, whereby you shall be able not only to withstand his temptations, but receive extraordinary benefit and comfort for them, so as to turn them into matter of glory and triumph. But by reason of the infirmity of your nature, the relics of sin within you, and the manifold temptations you meet with in the world, you find by sad experience, that notwithstanding the assistance you

receive from God's grace and Holy Spirit, yet you cannot exactly observe every punctilio of the moral law, nor so much as do any one good work so perfectly as that law requires : but do what you can, there is so much imperfection, so many defects in the best work you do, that it cannot in itself be termed good, nor by consequence acceptable unto God, as not corresponding in every point with his commands. And this is that which troubles you more than all the rest, that when you have done what you can, you still come short of what you ought to do : and God may justly be displeased with you, for the best as well as for the worst actions of your whole life.

It is very true ; yet howsoever, let not your hearts be troubled ; ye believe in God, believe also in Jesus Christ, who hath taken care of this, as well as of any thing else that concerns your salvation by him ; for he having performed not only perfect, but divine obedience to the whole law in our nature, God is pleased to overlook the defects of our obedience, and for his sake to accept of it, if it be but sincere, as well as if it was absolutely perfect. This we learn as from the whole design and tenor of the Gospel, so particularly from that remarkable passage of St. Peter, where, speaking to all Christians, he saith, *Ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*, 1 Pet. ii. 5. From whence it is plain, that although our sacrifices or good works be lame and imperfect, yet if they be but spiritual and sincere, they are acceptable to God, not in themselves, but by Jesus Christ ; by which means God makes us perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, Heb. xiii. 21. And therefore whether you pray or praise God, or hear his holy word, or receive his blessed sacrament, or give an alms to the poor, or whatsoever you do in obedience to God's commands, do but sincerely endeavour to do it as well

as you can, and trust on Christ for God's acceptance of it, and then you may be confident that he will accept of it, and be as well pleased with it, as if it was every way as perfect as it ought to be; which is certainly a matter of as great joy to a sincere Christian, as any one thing besides in the whole Gospel.

Now from these things thus put together, ye may easily see both the certainty and universality of the means which our Saviour here prescribes for the keeping our hearts from being troubled, which therefore we ought to use upon all occasions: but lest any of you should neglect or not use it aright, give me leave to apply it to you all. You have all, I dare say, your troubles of one sort or other; now of what kind soever they are, apprehend our blessed Saviour as present with you, as he really is, and that you hear him repeating these words to you, as he really doth by the mouth of his unworthy servant, saying, *Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me.* Do ye meet with many crosses and disappointments in the world? Are your bodies sick or weak? Your fortunes low, and your hopes of ever mending them little or none at all? Are your children undutiful, your relations unkind, and your enemies powerful and malicious? *Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me, and I will so order it, that all these things shall work together for your good.*

Are you apprehensive of any public calamities that may befall the church or kingdom in which you live, or of any private adversity that may happen to yourselves or families? Are you in danger of losing your estates, your liberty, your life, or that which is dearer to you, your good name and reputation in the world? *Let not your hearts be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in me;* and I will take care as of my church in general, so of every true member of it, that none of them who trust on me may be confounded. Are ye sensible of the greatness of your sins, the weakness of your graces,

the strength of the devil's temptations, or the imperfection of your own duties and good works? It is well ye are so: howsoever, *Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me: in my Father's house are many mansions: if it was not so, I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you: and if I go, I will come again, and receive you to myself, &c. Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.*

SERMON XLIII.

FAITH THE PRINCIPLE OF LOVE AND JOY

1 PET. i. 8.

Whom having not seen, ye love ; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

THERE is nothing that we know more certainly in this world, than that we know nothing certainly of the other, but what we are taught by God himself ; for that not being the object of our senses, we can receive no information from them about it ; and as for our reason, we all experience the truth of what we read in the book of Wisdom, *that we hardly guess aright at things that are upon earth, and with labour find the things that are before us or at hand*, Wisd. ix. 16. But then, as it there follows, *the things that are in heaven, who hath searched out ?* None certainly but they who looked for them in the holy Scriptures, where God himself hath revealed them to us, and thereby hath given us a more certain knowledge of them than we can have of any thing else ; for all our other knowledge comes either by our senses, or reason, or by the testimony of other men ; all which ways are fallible, we find them to be so by our own experience ; but so is not the word of God ; what he saith we are sure is true, as being spoken by him who cannot lie : and this seems to be the great reason why he himself was graciously pleased to acquaint us with all things belonging to our everlasting peace, that

we might not be left at such uncertainties about them as we are about other things, but might have all the assurance that could be given us of them, and accordingly believe them upon his word, so as to be fully persuaded of them in our own minds to the glory of his veracity and truth.

And verily as we have all the reason that can be to believe what God saith upon that very account, because he saith it ; so if we accordingly do it, we shall not only be certain of all things necessary for us to know, but this our faith will be the evidence of things not seen, representing them so clearly to us, that our souls will be touched with an inward sense and feeling of them, as much or rather much more than we are by such things that affect our outward senses : as when Moses by faith saw him that is invisible to the eye, it drowned all his sense of Pharaoh's anger, and of all the outward troubles that could befall him ; for it is written, *By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king ; for he endured as seeing him that is invisible*, Heb. xi. 27. So he that really believes that the almighty Governor of the world is infinitely above all things in it, and yet is always present with him wheresoever he is, according to his word, though he cannot see him with his eyes, yet he could not but fear and dread him, more than all the monarchs of this, and powers of the other world, although he saw them altogether, and was in the midst of them. He that really believes God to be better than all things else, as we are assured in his holy word ; though he cannot see him, yet he cannot but desire him above all things else. He that really believes sin, or the transgression of God's law, to be the greatest of all evils, and the cause of all the miseries that men suffer ; though he doth not see it, he must needs hate, abhor, and grieve for it, more than for those which he sees or feels. He that believeth that all impenitent sinners shall be eternally tormented in hell fire, as God hath said ; though he never yet saw it, yet he will strive all

he can to avoid and shun it, as much as if he did. He that really believes the promises that God hath made of advancing his faithful servants to the kingdom of heaven; though he doth not yet see it, he will hope to see it, and do all that is required in order to it.

Now as these several passions, fear, desire, hatred, grief, detestation, hope, and the like, are moved in us by a quick and lively faith, as well as by our sense, the same may be said of love and joy, as the apostle here observes; for, speaking of our Saviour Jesus Christ to all his true disciples, he saith, *Whom having not seen, ye love, &c.*

Where the words, *yet believing*, though expressed only in the latter, they are implied also in the former part of the sentence; as if he had said, *Whom having not seen, yet believing, ye love him; in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*; whence we may observe, that these passions or affections of love and joy, are raised by believing as well as seeing the object, as if the object be Christ our Saviour, they are raised, not in an ordinary manner, as by our senses, but in a manner that is unspeakable and full of glory.

First, as for our love, or that affection or motion of the will, whereby it is inclined to a person by reason of some excellence, agreeableness, or goodness, which we think or apprehend to be in him; such thoughts or apprehensions being usually produced in us only by our sight, we do not use to love one whom we never saw; though we may value him, and honour him, and admire him, yet we cannot have that complacency in him, which is properly called love; but this holds good only as to the things of this world; for no man hath seen God at any time, nor can see him; yet nevertheless all are bound to love him, and to love him too *with all their hearts*; and all they do so, who really believe what is revealed of him in his holy word; for their faith supplies the defect of their sight, and performs its office by re-

presenting him to them as the chiefest good, and fixing his divine perfections upon their minds, so as to inflame them with love and affection to him above all things else.

And so it doth in respect of Christ our Saviour. They who were so happy as to live and converse with him when he was upon earth, their eyes affected their hearts with love to him. The wonderful works he did, the gracious words he spoke, his extraordinary wisdom, humility, meekness, patience, affability, goodness, love, charity, and all other divine graces and virtues that shined so gloriously in him, might well raise up their affections to him, and did so in many to that degree, that they spent the rest of their lives wholly in his service, and at last laid them down for his sake ; but it is not so with us, and all others that lived after his ascension into heaven. He is far above out of our sight ; we never did, nor can expect to see him till the last day ; neither know we any thing of him, but what is recorded in the holy Scriptures ; but all Scripture being given by inspiration of God, we have more ground to believe what is there recorded of him, than if we saw it with our eyes ; and if we accordingly believe it with such a faith as is due to the word of truth itself, though we never saw him, yet we cannot but love him, as they did, to whom the apostle gives this testimony, *Whom having not seen, ye love.*

For why do we love one person that we see above another, but because we thereby perceive, or at least think that we perceive, something in him that attracts our hearts and affections to him, as some extraordinary qualification either of body or mind, wherein he seems to us to exceed all other, or some extraordinary expressions of love and kindness to us, which oblige us in gratitude to love him again ; but in both these respects, by a quick faith in God's holy word, we do not only perceive, but our whole souls are possessed with such a sense of our blessed Saviour, that will make us love him, though we never saw him, above all the world,

For by faith we understand that he is the only-begotten Son of God, of the same glory and goodness with the Father, and as such is the chiefest, the only good, in comparison of whom nothing else is good, and from whom every thing else receives whatsoever it hath of goodness ; and therefore we who love nothing but under the notion of good, must needs love him most, whom we believe to be the greatest good, although we never saw him.

By faith we understand, that he, *being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God, and yet took upon him the form of a servant, and was made man of the same nature with us*, and as such is the best of men, *holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners*, Heb. vii. 26. The only man that never sinned, that spake as never man spake, and went about doing good while he was upon earth, and is now made higher than the heavens, and exalted above all the creatures in the world, being set at the right hand of God, where he shines forth and appears infinitely more glorious to our faith, than the sun in its greatest brightness doth to our sight ; and therefore although we cannot see him with our bodily eye, if we do but look up to him with the eye of faith, how can we forbear to love him? Him in whom all perfections meet, that can any way excite our affections, and incline them to any person whatsoever.

By faith we understand also, that he is both God and man in one person ; so that as all amiable excellencies whatsoever are in him, so in him they are all divine and infinite, as being the excellencies of an infinite and divine person ; and therefore if we look upon him only as in himself, without any respect to us, his own personal excellencies will raise our believing hearts to such a pitch of love to him, that we shall not only love him though we never saw him, but we shall love him more than any thing we can ever see.

But by faith we understand moreover, that this glorious and divine person, who is thus infinitely lovely in

himself, hath expressed such love to us, as no tongue is able to express ; for greater love hath no man than this, *that a man lay down his life for his friend*, John xv. 13. But this love had Christ, not only man, but God our Saviour, for us ; and for that very end and purpose too, that he might become our Saviour, he laid down his life ; he laid it down upon the cross for us, and all to save us from the wrath of God, and to restore us to his favour, and in that to all the good things we can desire or love : who is able to comprehend the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of this divine love ? or know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge ? Eph. iii. 18, 19. That God himself should become man, and then be obedient to death, even the death of the cross, and all to reconcile himself to us, and us unto himself ; what shall we say ? what thought can reach the height of this divine love ? how can we think of it, and not be amazed and confounded at it ? how can we believe it, and our hearts not burn within us, and be all in a flame with love to him who thus loved us, as to give himself for us ? It cannot be : he that really believes it, cannot but love him, though he never saw him, with all his heart ; though he never saw his person, he sees the tokens of his love in every blessing that he receives from God, and therefore must needs love him again, not with such love as he hath for other things, but of another nature, and an higher pitch, as far exceeding his love to all things in the world besides, as if there was nothing in the world to love but him.

Let us hear what he himself, our dear and ever-blessed Redeemer, saith, *He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me ; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me*, Matt. x. 37 And elsewhere, *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple*, Luke xiv. 26. whereby he hath given us to understand, that whosoever doth not love

him above all things else, so as to hate rather than love all other things in comparison of him, is not worthy to be called his disciple; he doth not truly believe in him; *for true faith worketh by love*, Gal. v. 6. by love to Christ, and to other things only in subordination unto him, and for his sake.

We have a remarkable instance of this in St. Paul, who being able truly to say, *The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*, Gal. ii. 20. This his faith wrought so effectually in him, that he looked upon all things in this world as nothing, as less than nothing, in comparison of Christ his Saviour: *What things, saith he, were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do account them but dung, that I may win Christ*, Phil. iii. 7, 8. Yea, his own life was not so dear unto him, as he who loved him so as to die for him. *I am in a strait*, saith he, *betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better*, Phil. i. 23. To be with Christ whom his soul loved, he esteemed better, far better than life itself; and therefore when the disciples besought him with tears not to go up to Jerusalem for fear of the Jews, who had a design upon his life, he answered roundly, *What mean ye to weep, and to break my heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus*, Acts xx. 13. This was to love Christ indeed; and thus it is that all who truly believe in him, truly also love him, so as to prefer his love and favour not only before all the concerns of this life, but before life itself; insomuch, that if any thing happens to oppose or hinder his interest in the world, or theirs in him, how much soever it may seem to be for their temporal advantage, they do not long stand pausing about it, but immediately throw it off with an holy scorn, as not wor-

thy to come into competition with him, their dear Lord and Saviour, whom they believe to be, as he is, the best friend they have in the world, and therefore must needs love him above all things in it.

But love being the fulfilling of the whole law, as no man can believe in Christ, but he will love him, so no man can love him, but he will obey him, and do what he commands, that so he may please him, and continue to be beloved by him, as all desire to be by those which they themselves love: this Christ himself makes the effect and sign of our love to him; for thus saith the Lord, the Almighty God our Saviour, *If ye love me, keep my commandments*, John xiv. 15. *He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me*, ver. 21. *And ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you*, chap. xv. 14. Which being the words of Christ himself, the Judge as well as Saviour of the world, all that do not sincerely endeavour to walk in all his commandments blameless, may be confident that they are none of his friends; he neither loves them, nor they him, and therefore they are in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity; whatsoever outward blessings they may seem to enjoy, they are under the curse of God, that dreadful curse which he denounced by St. Paul, *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha*, 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

But what doth our Lord say to those who love him, so as to keep his commandments? Hark and wonder: *He that loveth me*, saith he, *shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him*, John xiv. 21. *If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him*, ver. 23. *And if ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love*, chap. xv. 10. where we see, that all who love and obey Christ, though

they never saw him, have his own word engaged for it, that his Father will love them; that he will love them; that they will both come unto them, and make their abode with them; that he will manifest himself to them; that they shall abide in his love, even as he abides in the Father's; and what can they desire more? Who can describe the height of that happiness which is here assured to them? It is past my skill; and therefore I shall conclude this, as the apostle doth his Epistle to the Ephesians, *Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.*

But now we must further observe, that as the happiness which is prepared in the other world, for those who love God our Saviour in this, is so great, that no heart is able to conceive it, according as it is written, *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him*, 1 Cor. ii. 9. so even in this life, it is so great that no tongue is able to express it, as appears from my text, where the apostle, speaking of Christ to all that believe him, having first said, *whom having not seen, ye love*; he immediately adds, *in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.* It is joy unspeakable, while they do not see him; what then will it be when they do?

But to understand this aright, we must call to mind how all men naturally delight in what they love, if it be present with them; and that Christ is always so to them who believe in him, although they cannot see him; for they have it, as we have heard, from his own mouth, that he makes his abode with them, which they believing upon his word, have him accordingly always present with them, according to that of the apostle, *that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith*, Eph. iii. 17 By which means his faithful people have always rejoiced in him, even they also who lived long before he appeared in the world, any other way than to

the eye of their faith in the promises of God. *Your father Abraham*, saith he, *rejoiced to see my day, he saw it, and was glad*, John ix. 56. *We will rejoice*, said David, *in thy salvation*, Psal. xx. 5. *Behold*, saith the prophet Isaiah, *God is my salvation, I will trust, and not be afraid. For the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song : he also is become my salvation : therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation*, Isa. xii. 2, 3. And Habakkuk, *I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation*, Hab. iii. 18. Which is much the same with that of the blessed Virgin, *My soul doth magnify the Lord, my Spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour*, Luke i. 46, 47

And it is much to be observed, that God our Saviour was no sooner born into the world, but an angel was dispatched from heaven, with this joyful message to the shepherds, that trembled at his presence, *Fear not ; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people : for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord*, Luke ii. 10, 11. Good tidings indeed ! the best that was ever brought to mankind ! Well may it be called Εὐαγγέλιον, the Gospel, or good word, that affordeth matter of so great joy, not only to some, but to all people, that they have all a Saviour, and are all therefore capable of being saved ; and may all be so, if they will but believe in him ; for all that do so, will certainly be saved by him, and therefore cannot but rejoice in him, although they do not yet see him, as I should now prove.

But how to do it, so as that all may be convinced of it, I must confess I know not ; for joy being a thing that none can be sensible of, any other way than by feeling it ; after all that can be said, they, who for want of faith never rejoiced in Christ themselves, will hardly be persuaded that any other do so : but as for such as believe, they need no arguments to convince them of it,

for they feel it in themselves ; they find by their own experience, that Christ is the only joy and comfort of their hearts : as their faith puts them upon obeying all the other commandments of God, so that particularly whereby they are commanded to rejoice in the Lord always, Phil. iv. 4. And accordingly they can always say with the apostles, *We rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh*, chap. iii. 3. And if we cannot say so as well as they, it is our own fault ; it is because we do not believe the Scriptures, the word of God himself : for if we did, although we never yet have seen Christ ; yet as we should certainly love him, so we should as certainly rejoice in him with all our hearts, according to that of the Psalmist, *they that love thy name shall be joyful in thee*, Psal. v. 12.

To make this as plain as I can, I shall first lay down these following propositions.

I. They who believe the Scriptures, must believe themselves to be sinners, that they have broken the laws of God their Maker, and are therefore obnoxious to his displeasure, and to all the curses and punishments both in this world and the next, which he hath there threatened against all that do so ; for it is written, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them*, Gal. iii. 10.

II. They who believe the Scriptures, must believe that Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, came into the world to save sinners, such sinners as they are, 1 Tim. i. 15. and that he for that purpose, in their nature, suffered the punishments which God had threatened against them, by dying, or offering up himself as a sacrifice for their sins ; and so was a propitiation for their sins, *and not for theirs only, but for the sins of the whole world*, 1 John ii. 2. And redeemed them from the curse of the law, *being made a curse for them*, Gal. iii. 13.

III. They who believe the Scriptures, must likewise believe, that as Jesus Christ was thus delivered for their

offences, *he was raised again for their justification*, Rom. iv. 25. and for that end went up to heaven, now *to appear in the presence of God for them*, Heb. ix. 24. that he is now there, *their Advocate with the Father*, 1 John ii. 1. *the only Mediator between God and men*, 1 Tim. ii. 5. and is therefore *able to save to the uttermost them which come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them*, Heb. vii. 25.

This is that which Christ himself prescribes as the great remedy against trouble of heart: *Let not your hearts be troubled*, saith he; *ye believe in God, believe also in me: in my Father's house are many mansions; if it was not so, I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you*, John xiv. 1, 2. implying, that if we really believe that he is gone to heaven, and is there preparing a place for us, nothing could trouble or discompose our hearts, but they would be always full of joy and comfort: *If ye loved me*, saith he, *ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father; for my Father is greater than I*, ver. 28. They who truly believe and love their Saviour, must needs be glad that he is gone to heaven, both for his sake, and their own; for his, in that he even as man is there exalted above all the creatures in the world; and for their own, in that he is there carrying on and finishing the great work of their salvation; for as the high-priest under the law, having offered up a sacrifice, took some of the blood, and went into the most holy place, and there sprinkling it about made reconciliation and atonement for the sins of the people of Israel; so Christ, the true High-priest, having offered up himself as a sacrifice for the sins of all the world, he went in that nature in which he did it into the highest heavens, and by virtue thereof is there continually interceding with his Father to be reconciled to all the true Israel of God, even such as truly believe in him: hence it is that he is called the Lamb, *the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins*

of the world, not only when he was upon earth, and *was led as a lamb to the slaughter*, John i. 29. but now also that he is in heaven; he is there also called the Lamb, as we often read in the Revelation of St. John, to denote that he sits there as the propitiation or propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the world, washing his faithful people from their sins with his own blood, and so reconciling them to Almighty God.

Now how can they who are sensible of their sins, whereby they have incensed the wrath of Almighty God against them; how can they, I say, believe this, and not rejoice and be glad that they have such a Saviour? For my part, I do not see how we could have had any joy at all but for him, any more than the fallen angels have; they believe in God as well as we, but cannot rejoice, but tremble at the thoughts of their having offended his divine glory, and have no Mediator that can appease his wrath, and reconcile him to them; and all mankind would have been in the same desperate and most deplorable condition, if the ever-blessed Jesus was not the Mediator between God and them; we had every moment been all liable to be cast into the same everlasting fire that is prepared for the devil and his angels. What joy then could we have taken in any thing, when we could never have been sure to enjoy it so much as one moment, but should have been continually haunted with the furies of our own breasts, and with a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and the fiery indignation of our almighty Creator! What cause then have we to rejoice in him, without whom we could never have truly rejoiced in any thing at all; whereas, by him, we have all things we can in reason desire, to fill our hearts with joy and gladness?

For, let us abstract our thoughts a while from all things here below, and by a quick and lively faith lift them up to our blessed Saviour, as now sitting at the right hand of God in the highest heavens, and there in-

terceding for us, by means of the sacrifice he offered for our sins, when he was upon earth ; and let us but consider withal the joyful effects of that his intercession, and then let us forbear rejoicing in him if we can ; he that can, may be confident, that he either doth not believe himself to be a sinner, or else he doth not believe in Christ his Saviour, nor so much as what is written of him in the holy Scriptures.

For by Jesus Christ, (I speak in the name of all true believers,) by him, I say, as he is now our Mediator and Advocate with the Father, our sins are all pardoned, and all our obligations to punishment for them are cancelled and made void, so that none of them shall ever be charged upon us, or rise up in judgment against us ; for it is written, *In him we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins*, Col. i. 14. *And him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins*, Acts v. 31.

By him we are justified, or accounted and declared righteous before God himself, and numbered among his saints ; for it is written, *He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification*, Rom. iv. 25. and, *he who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*, 2 Cor. v. 21.

By him all differences are made up between God and us, so that his anger is appeased, and he is as perfectly reconciled and well-pleased with us as if we had never provoked him ; for it is written, *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*, Rom. v. 1.

By him we are admitted into the nearest relation that can be to God himself, we are made his children and the heirs of his kingdom in heaven ; for it is written, *As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that be-*

lieve in his name, John i. 12. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, Rom. viii. 17

By him we are endued with grace and power from above to serve and obey God, and do whatsoever he would have us ; for it is written, *I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me, Phil. iv. 13.*

By him whatsoever we thus do by his assistance, although as done by us it be very imperfect, yet notwithstanding it is accepted of by God as perfect ; for it is written, *Ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. ii. 5.*

By him we receive whatsoever good things we desire, and ask of God in his name ; for it is written, *Verily, verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you, John xvi. 23.*

By him, when we go out of this wicked world, we shall be received into heaven, to live with him and his holy angels in the place which he is there preparing for us ; for it is written, *In my Father's house are many mansions ; if it was not so, I would have told you : I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself ; that where I am, there you may be also, John xiv. 2, 3.*

What shall I say more ? Did we ever receive any grace or favour at the hands of God ? Are we able to overcome the world, to resist the devil, or crucify the flesh ? Did we ever think a good thought, speak a good word, or do any one good act as we ought to do ? Do we enjoy the means of grace, or find any benefit by them ? Did we ever escape any danger, seen or unseen ? Are we preserved from any evil or trouble that ever befel any man in the world ? Do all things work together for our good ? Have we any thing that is

good for us, and do we take any comfort in it? For these, and all other mercies that we ever did or can receive from the almighty Governor of the world, we are wholly beholden to God our Saviour, and to that powerful mediation or intercession that he is continually making in heaven for us; and therefore have all the cause that can be to rejoice in him, and that too, not with such joy as we have in other things; but, as the apostle here expresseth it, *with joy unspeakable and full of glory*.

It must needs be joy unspeakable that is placed in him, from whom we receive so many unspeakable blessings, spiritual blessings in heavenly places, far above all manner of expression: they who are so happy as to feel it in themselves, know not how to describe it to others, and therefore I shall not offer at it; but only observe in general, that when they who believe in Christ, lift up their hearts unto him, although they do not now see him, yet considering with themselves what a glorious person he is, what he hath done, and what he is now doing in heaven for them, they find their minds at ease, and their whole souls overspread with solid and substantial joy, of the same kind with that wherewith *the spirits of just men made perfect* are transported in heaven; therefore called here, not only joy unspeakable, but full of glory, as being in a lower degree, like that which the glorified saints enjoy, by living under the bright refreshing beams of the Sun of righteousness shining most gloriously upon them; according to that of the Psalmist, *Blessed is the people, O Lord, that can rejoice in thee; they shall walk in the light of thy countenance*, Psal. lxxxix. 16. Thus blessed are all they who have not seen, believe, and believing, rejoice in the Lord Jesus.

Wherefore that we also may be in the number of the blessed, let us likewise call in our affections from all things else, and fix them upon him; he is our hope and

our help, he is our sun and our shield, he is our strength and our song, and is become our salvation ; he is now our Mediator and Advocate with the Father ; let us rejoice and be glad, and give honour to him, and strive all we can to advance his glory upon earth, as he is procuring ours in heaven, that when we leave this world we may go to him, live always with him, and see him, and love him, and enjoy him perfectly, and join with all the company of heaven in rejoicing and praising his holy name, and singing Hallelujah, salvation to our God, and to the Lamb that sitteth upon the throne : to him, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour and glory, now and for ever.

SERMON XLIV.

CHRIST THE FOUNDATION OF ALL THE PROMISES.

2 COR. i. 20.

*For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him
Amen, unto the glory of God by us.*

IF we could but in our thoughts travel throughout the earth, and take notice of all the animals, and plants, and minerals, and whatsoever else is to be found within it, or upon it, and then go up to heaven, and there view the sun and moon, and all the fixed stars and planets, observe their number, their bulk, their order, their motions, their influences, their height and distances from one another, as well as from the earth, and contemplate upon all that is to be seen in every one of them; could we, I say, but do this, how should we admire and adore that infinite Being that made all these things at first, that still upholds them by his power, and governs and disposeth of all and every one of them according to his own will? But how much more, if possible, should we wonder, if we should see this all-glorious and almighty God, the Lord of sabaoth, the universal Governor of the world, if we should see him expressing any particular care or respect for a company of little creatures he hath made upon earth, called men, who kept not their first estate in which he made them, but have corrupted themselves so, as no way to answer his end in making them, and are so far from doing him any service, such as he

intended, that they generally act quite contrary to what he would have them do.

And yet we find that this almighty Creator and supreme Governor of all things, hath had a particular concern for these his apostate, his degenerate, his rebellious creatures upon earth, and hath expressed it in such a wonderful manner, that all the world may justly stand amazed and astonished at it; for notwithstanding that all men have sinned, and therefore deserved to be cast down, as the apostate angels are, *into hell, and delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto the judgment of the great day*, 2 Pet. ii. 4. yet nevertheless so great, so infinite was the love of God to them, that having from all eternity begotten a Son of the same nature or substance with himself, he gave this his beloved, his only-begotten Son, and sent him among them, *that whosoever of them would believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*, John iii. 16. And that they might have all the ground that could be to believe and trust in him for it, God himself was pleased in him to promise them all the grace and favour that can be desired in order to it, and hath caused his said promises to be recorded, and, as it were, enrolled among his oracles in the holy Scriptures, that were given by his inspiration, so that whatsoever is there promised, they have his own word engaged for it, and therefore may be confident it will be punctually performed.

Now all our hopes and expectations of any favour or kindness from Almighty God being grounded wholly upon these promises which he hath been graciously pleased to make us, it highly concerns us all to be rightly instructed about them, that we may understand what use to make of them, and how to apply and improve them, so as that we also as well as others may receive the benefit of them, to his glory, and to our own everlasting comfort and happiness; but all that is necessary for us to know concerning the promises of God, is briefly contained in the words which I have now read, or may

be easily collected from them when we fully apprehend the true sense and meaning of them.

For which purpose therefore we must first observe, that the apostle, some time before the writing this Epistle, had proposed to go to Corinth, but afterwards deferred this journey for a great reason, which he declares, v. 23. and therefore he would not have them impute it to any lightness in him, as if in him there was *yea, yea*, and *nay, nay*, v. 17 that is, as if, according to the flesh or custom of the world, he altered his mind upon any light occasion, now saying *yea, yea*, and then *nay, nay*, to the same thing ; but, as may be frequently observed all over the Bible, when the prophets or apostles are speaking of some particular subject, the Holy Ghost, by whom they were inspired, takes occasion from thence to reveal some great truth that is generally necessary for all mankind to know ; so here, while the apostle is speaking of changing his mind about going to Corinth, *not out of lightness, but upon good reason* ; the Holy Ghost takes occasion from thence to speak of the certainty of his word and promises in general, in the same terms that were before used concerning the apostle's purpose to go to Corinth, assuring them, that the word and doctrine of Jesus Christ which was preached to them *was not yea and nay, but in him was yea*, v. 19. It was not sometimes one, and sometimes another ; but always the same : and then he adds this remarkable sentence, *for all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, to the glory of God by us*.

A wonder that none of our expositors or critics have observed, that the words in the original, Ὅσαι γὰρ ἐπαγγελίαι Θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ τὸ ναὶ, καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ τὸ Ἀμήν, should be rather translated, *As many promises of God as in him are yea, in him also are Amen*. This seems to express the force of the word ὅσαι *quotquot*, and agrees with the scope and design of the place, as well, if not better, than the other ; but I shall not insist upon it, because, which way soever we take to interpret the words, it comes at

last to the same thing, even *that whatsoever promises God hath made are in Christ, both yea and Amen*; not *yea and nay*; sometimes affirmed, and sometimes denied; but *yea and Amen*, always the same, what God promiseth; and so it were, saith *yea*, to it; the same is always *Amen*; that is, as the word signifies, *so it is*; it is just so as God saith it shall be; it is not only true and certain, but certainty and truth itself in Jesus Christ, who himself also is therefore called *Amen*, as being the faithful and true witness, Rev. iii. 14. *yea the truth itself*, John xiv. 6. As God is called the God of *Amen* in the Hebrew, which we rightly translate *the God of truth*, Isa. lxxv. 17 so that the meaning of the words in general is this, that all the promises of God are both affirmed and performed in Christ, or, as St. Chrysostom expresseth it, ἐν αὐτῷ, γενέσθαι ἔχουσι καὶ πληρωθῆναι, *in him they have both their existence and completion*; they are both made and fulfilled in him; and so all that are in him, *yea* in him also are *Amen*; being as certainly fulfilled as ever they were made in him.

I should not, contrary to my custom, have troubled you with such a critical exposition of the words, but that at first sight, at least to many, they may seem obscure; but now, I hope, they are plain to all, and all may easily observe these four things in them.

I. That God hath made several promises, here called *the promises of God*.

II. These promises are all made in Christ, *in him they are yea*.

III. As they are made, so they are fulfilled in Christ; *in him they are also Amen*.

IV All this is for the glory of God. Under which four heads all is comprised that is necessary for us to know concerning the promises of God; and therefore I shall endeavour to explain them particularly, as they lie in order. As to the first, the promises of God in general, these things may be observed.

1. God might justly have dealt with fallen man as he

did with the fallen angels, by his absolute authority and dominion, without promising him any more kindness than he did the other ; but howsoever to manifest his infinite goodness and truth, as well as his power and justice to the world, he was graciously pleased to give men *exceeding great and precious promises, by which they might be partakers of the divine nature*, 2 Pet. i. 4. and so be restored to their first estate again. That as they all fell in their first parents, by not believing the threatening which he denounced in case they did not observe what he commanded ; so they might rise again if it was not their own fault, every one in his own person, by believing the promises he made them, in case they did. This is that which is called the new covenant, and the covenant of grace, because it is founded and established upon many gracious promises, and so is distinguished from the old covenant, which was a covenant of works. There the condition was, *do this and live* : here it is, *believe this and live* ; for upon our believing the promise which God hath made us to that purpose, we are enabled to do all that is required in order unto life ; and we have all the reason that can be to believe what he hath said and promised, *who cannot lie*, Tit. i. 2. And yet to shew more abundantly unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, he confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, *who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us*, Heb. vi. 17, 18. It was not for his own sake therefore, nor to make his word or promise stronger in itself, that he confirmed it by an oath, his word being always as much as his oath ; but it was for our sakes only, that we who usually among ourselves lay greater weight upon a man's oath than upon his word, might more firmly believe his promises, and so have stronger consolation in them, when we flee for refuge from the wrath of the Lord God of sabaoth, the almighty Governor of the whole world, whom we cannot

look upon as in himself, but as a consuming fire, ready every moment to burn up such rotten stubble as we are, and destroy us for ever : and whither can we flee for refuge ? How can we shelter ourselves from these everlasting burnings ? No way certainly, but by laying hold upon the hope that is set before us in the promises which he hath made us, which he himself hath made us, and so hath given us the surest ground that can be to fasten the anchor of our hope in them.

2. We must observe also, that all the promises that God hath made us are recorded in the holy Scriptures, given by his inspiration, and no where else. This first draught of them, as we there find, was brought by his holy angels, as his ambassadors or messengers, (as they are called in the original languages,) sent by him on purpose to do it ; they always came in his name, and what they said was not their own, but his word, speaking in them, insomuch, that whensoever they appeared and spake, as they often did to the patriarchs of old, God himself is always said to appear and speak. Thus it was that he delivered his promises to Adam, Noah, Abraham, and others, before the law was given by the ministry of the same angels ; but afterwards he was pleased to repeat, explain, and enlarge his promises by his prophets and holy men, speaking as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, so that it was God that spake by them also, as he did at last also by his Son and his apostles ; and whatsoever promises he had thus given to mankind, either by his angels or holy men, he caused to be written down, and kept upon record in that holy writing, which we call the Bible, that men in all ages might know where to find them, and might be fully assured they were given to him, seeing they are all registered in that holy Scripture which was given by his inspiration, and no where else ; for we know of no promises that God ever made to the other world, but what are there written ; but what is there written, we are sure is his word, and therefore have infinite cause to prize that divine writing, and to

magnify his holy name for it ; in that we there find, not only what he would have us to do, but likewise what promises he hath made us both in and for the doing of it.

3. Hence we may next observe, that the first promise that God made to mankind was made to all mankind in their first parents ; for they having eaten of that fruit, of which God had said to Adam, *In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*, Gen. ii. 27 and having by that means corrupted their whole blood, and destroyed both themselves and all that should ever proceed from them as their fountain or spring head ; and all this being done by the instigation of the old serpent the devil, tempting woman first to do it ; God said to the serpent, *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed ; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel*, Gen. iii. 15. This was spoken to the serpent as a threatening to him, but designed also as a great promise to mankind, even that one should be born of the *seed of the woman that should bruise the serpent's head*, where all the subtlety and strength lay, whereby he had outwitted and overcome our first parents, and that the *serpent should bruise his heel*, his lower part, which he should take of the seed of the woman, that would be bruised, so as to be put to death, *that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil*, or serpent here spoken of, Heb. ii. 14. So that God was here pleased to promise a Saviour to mankind, who should destroy the works of the devil, 1 John iii. 8. undo what he had now done, and so restore men to the same state from which they were fallen by his instigation ; which promise being made to our first parents, when all mankind was yet in their loins, it was made equally to all, without any restriction or limitation, so that all are alike capable of receiving the benefit of it ; and therefore when he who is here promised to proceed of the seed of the woman, was afterwards determined to be born of

the seed of Abraham, God said to him, *In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*, Gen. xxii. 18. And when he who was thus promised to Adam, and then more plainly and explicitly to Abraham ; when he, I say, was accordingly born of the blessed Virgin, he himself said, *that God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*, John iii. 16.

This therefore was the first promise that God made to mankind, even that he would send them a Saviour, who would save them from their sins, and raise them up again to eternal life. This he often renewed, repeated, explained by his prophets in all ages, till near the time that it was to be accomplished, which his faithful people therefore earnestly expected, till it was accomplished in Jesus of Nazareth ; of whom St. Paul therefore saith to the Jews, that every day expect it, *We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again*, Acts xiii. 32, 33. The promise, as if it was the only promise that was made unto the fathers, and so in effect it was ; this being the root from whence all the other spring, and from whence they receive their whole force and virtue.

4. For here we must further observe, that although this first and grand promise was absolutely made to all mankind, and was accordingly fulfilled, without any conditions required on their part ; yet all the other promises grafted upon it are made only to those who believe this ; so that all who will not take God's word, that he would send them a Saviour, and now that it is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, will not believe in him, and the promise which is made in him for all things necessary to their salvation, they exclude themselves from the benefit of all his promises, as not belonging to them, no more than as if they had never been made ; for the apostle, putting the Ephesians in mind of the sad condition they were in

before they believed in Christ, saith, *At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the common-wealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope*, Eph. ii. 12. No hope, because no promise; and elsewhere speaking of the Israelites, he saith, *that to them pertained the adoption and glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises*, Rom. ix. 4. The promises pertained to them, and to them only, as they were the church of God, and his faithful people, believing in him, and the promise he had made of the Messiah, the Saviour of the world; so it is at this day; *all that are not within the church are without the promises*, and so are they too who are admitted into the church, unless they are sound members of it. It is true, all that are baptized, and so are brought into the church, so long as they outwardly profess to believe in Christ, although they really do it not, yet they live under the outward dispensation of the promises, suitable to their outward profession, and accordingly have the promises offered to them, if they will accept of them; but none can lay claim to any of them until they believe in Christ, so as to receive power from him to become the sons of God, and are both made and accepted of as righteous in him; for it is to such only that all the promises confirmed in him are made; and therefore the apostle saith, *that godliness hath the promise both of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*, 1 Tim. iv. 8. Godliness, not sin and wickedness; until men be sanctified, or made godly by faith in Christ, they are utter strangers to all the promises; but all the godly, all that are made truly the children of God by faith in Christ, they are all heirs of the promises, and may claim them as their inheritance for ever.

This will further appear in our last observation, which is concerning the several sorts of promises, which it hath pleased the most high God to make to his faithful people upon earth; for he hath made them promises of several kinds, and of all things too that they can desire;

and therefore I shall not undertake to give you a particular account of all his promises, but shall take notice only of such general heads, to which they may be all referred, so that you may understand how to make use of them, and apply them to yourselves as occasion shall require.

This I know may seem an uncommon subject, and perhaps not very grateful to some sort of people ; such, I mean, who think we ought to insist altogether upon moral duties, not upon such as are purely evangelical, as if we were not the ministers of the Gospel, but only of the Law ; but such would do well to consider, that trusting on God is one of the highest moral duties that we owe him, and yet can never pay it to him as we ought, without knowing the promises which he hath given us whereupon to ground it ; and besides, this is that great duty, without which we can never perform any other, for we can do nothing aright without the assistance of God's grace, and we can never have that, without trusting on the promises which he hath made us of it, which therefore it is necessary for us to understand, as ever we desire to do any thing that may be acceptable in his sight ; upon which account, although a discourse concerning the promises of God will relish but little with other people ; yet they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, and have their senses exercised to discern between good and evil, they will taste the sweetness and feel the benefit of it ; for whose sakes therefore I shall search into, and lay open the several sorts of promises that God hath made, that they may know how to have recourse unto them, and exercise their faith upon them, in the various changes and chances of this mortal life.

First therefore we must know, that it hath pleased Almighty God to make us many promises in the same way and manner as we are wont to make them to one another, by saying that he will do us such or such a kindness, or such a favour shall happen to us ; as where he saith to Israel, *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers,*

they shall not overflow thee ; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee, Isa. xliii. 2. Thus his promises most commonly run ; but sometimes he is pleased to make them only by declaring what he is or doth for his people ; as where he proclaimeth his holy name, saying, *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7* For he having proclaimed this of himself, his people have the same ground to believe that he will be gracious and merciful to them, as if he had said in express terms, that he would be so ; as we see in the prophet Micah, who having said, *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his people ? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.* The prophet immediately adds, *He will turn again, he will have compassion on us, he will subdue our iniquities, and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depth of the sea, Mic. vii. 18, 19.* Because God is so merciful as to pardon iniquity, therefore the prophet peremptorily concludes that he will do it ; and so he himself explains it, saying, *I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgression for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins, Isa. xliii. 25.* whereby he hath given us to understand, that when he saith he doth it for his people, it is the same in effect as if he had said he would do it. Thus where it is said, *The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, Psal. xxxiii. 18.* it is the same in respect of our trusting on him for it ; as if he had said, *that his eye shall be upon them ;* and when it is said, *that all things work together for good to them who love God, Rom. viii. 28.* it is the same as if he had said, they shall do so ; and where our Lord saith, *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them, Matt. xviii. 20.* it is the same as if he had

said, I will be there. There are many such places in holy Scripture, which do not seem to be promises, yet really are such foundations of our faith and trust in God, that they may be justly reckoned among his promises; in that we have thereby his own word to build our faith upon, as much as if it had been a formal promise; which I therefore observe, because it will be of great use towards our understanding the nature of his promises, and likewise towards our exercising our faith aright upon them.

In the next place we may observe, that Almighty God in his holy word hath made some promises to his whole church in general, others only to particular persons. The whole church or congregation of faithful people dispersed over the face of the earth he hath promised to preserve, so as always to have a church upon earth, notwithstanding all the opposition that men or devils can make against it; saying to St. Peter, *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*, Matt. xvi. 18. And for that end he hath promised that he and his Holy Spirit will be always with the ministers or officers which he hath appointed to administer his word and sacraments in it, saying to his apostles, and in them to all that should succeed them in the ministry, *Lo, I am with you always unto the end of the world*, Matt. xxviii. 20. *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever*, John xiv 16. And as he hath made these promises to his whole visible church or body of Christ, so he hath made another to all the sound members of it, the whole communion of saints, or truly righteous persons of all sorts and stations in it. Indeed all his promises are made in a peculiar manner to this his invisible church, which he looks upon as his household or family; and among others, that also, where he saith, *You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you for all your*

iniquities, Amos iii. 2. For although this at first sight may look like a threatening, it is really a great promise that he will take particular care of his people, as a loving father doth of his children, in correcting them for their faults, in order to amendment. According to that of the apostle, *Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth*, Heb. xii. 6. Which also is a promise to the same purpose, according to what I before observed.

There are other promises made to particular persons; to some in their private capacities, which therefore do not belong to any other; as when God promised Jacob to be with him in his return to the land of his fathers, Gen. xxxi. 3. Hezekiah to add to his days fifteen years, Isa. xxxviii. 5. and to St. Paul, that he should be brought before Cæsar, notwithstanding the danger he was then in, Acts xxvii. 24. These and such like promises as are made to particular persons, with relation only to their private circumstances, cannot be extended or applied to any other; but so may such as are made to particular persons, as saints, or the members of Christ's body in general; what is promised to any saint as such, every saint may claim an interest in it, as well as he. This we learn from the apostle; for God having said to Joshua, *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*, Josh. i. 5. this the apostle takes also to himself, and to all that were of his communion, saying, *Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have*; for he hath said, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*; so that we may boldly say, *The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me*, Heb. xiii. 5, 6. Which gives us great light into the right way of applying to ourselves those promises also which were made to others; for by this apostolical way of arguing, our Lord having said to St. Paul, *My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness*; we may boldly say with him, *Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my*

infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me,
2 Cor xii. 9.

Again, some of the promises are absolute, others conditional. By absolute, I mean not such as were made to the children of Israel for their deliverance from the Egyptian slavery, and Babylonish captivity; nor such as concerned our blessed Saviour, his birth, miracles, death, resurrection, ascension, and his sending the Holy Ghost upon the day of Pentecost, mentioned Joel ii. 28. For these were so absolute in themselves, that nothing was required on man's part as a condition of the performance of them, neither were these in the number of those promises we are now speaking of, which God hath made to his saints and servants in all ages. Some of which I call absolute, only because they are made without any condition expressed or annexed to them: as where it is said, *Behold he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep: the Lord is thy keeper, the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, neither the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil. He shall preserve thy soul, &c.* Psal. cxxi. 4, 5, 6, 7 which we see is made without any condition but what is implied in the word Israel, which shews it to be made only to the true Israel of God, as all these promises are. But in others, some condition is commonly expressed, so that no man hath any right to the promise without performing that condition: as where it is said, *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon,* Isa. lv. 7 And again, *Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin,* Ezek. xviii. 39. Here is mercy and forgiveness promised, upon condition that men repent and turn to God, otherwise not. Thus where our Saviour saith, *Come to me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,* Matt. xi. 28.

he promiseth rest, but it is to those only who labour and are heavy laden, and come to him for it. Where he saith, *He that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out*, John vi. 37 he promiseth to receive and save all that come unto him, but it is upon that condition, that they come unto him. Where he saith, *If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it*, John xiv 14. he promiseth his faithful people to do what they ask, but it is upon that condition, that they ask in his name. Thus the promises usually run ; and therefore they who do not take care to perform the condition required on their part in any promise, have no ground to expect it should be performed to them, for it is not made to them.

But here we must likewise observe, that besides the particular condition annexed to any promise, there is one general condition required in all, in order to the performance of them ; what that is, we are taught by God himself, who having made many promises to his people, adds by way of proviso, *Thus saith the Lord, I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them*, Ezek. xxxvi. 37 whereby he hath given us to understand, that whatsoever blessing he hath promised, we must pray unto him for it, otherwise he shall not have it. And we must pray in faith too as he hath taught us, James i. 6. that is, we must believe and trust on him for the performance of his promise, or else he will not do it, so that without this we forfeit our interest in all his promises.

In the last place we may consider the promises of God, as they respect either this life or the next, according to that of the apostle, *godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*, 1 Tim. iv 8. As for the things of this present life, we have that remarkable promise uttered by our Lord's own mouth, *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you*, Matt. vi. 33.

This is one of those which we called conditional promises, for it is made upon this condition, that we *first seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness*; and if we do that, our Lord here promiseth, that we shall not only find that which we first sought, but that *all these things shall be added to us*, or given us over and above that. What he means by these things appears from the context, for he is here speaking of the things of this life, meat, drink, and clothing, of which he saith in the verse before the said promise, *your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things*, ver. 32. these therefore are the things which he here promiseth, even all such things as our heavenly Father knoweth to be needful for us in this life, or, as St. Peter expresseth it, *all things pertaining to life and godliness*, 2 Pet. i. 3. So far as any thing is needful to our living and serving God in this world, so far it is promised, but no farther; for what is not needful, may do us more hurt than good. But all the promises are only of such things as are really good for us: for what is evil cannot be the subject of a promise, but a threatening. But so far as any outward blessing, as health, strength, long life, wealth, ease, liberty, and the like, so far as it is really a blessing, or good for them, so far it is promised to all that are truly righteous, not only in the place before quoted, but in many others. As where it is said, *They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing*, Psal. xxxiv. 10. *For the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly*, Psal. lxxxiv. 11 And therefore all such may be confident that what they have is good for them; and what they have not, it is good for them not to have it.

But the greatest promises of all are those which have respect to the other life; for Almighty God hath been so infinitely gracious and merciful to us, as to promise us not only eternal life and happiness in the other world, but likewise whatsoever is necessary to be done in this, that we may be qualified for it, and made meet to be

partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, Col. i. 12. The whole Scripture is full of such promises; and that we may be sure to understand them aright, God himself hath given us the sum of them, in his description of the new covenant founded upon them, and recorded both in the Old and New Testament. Let us hear what he himself saith, *This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest; for I will forgive their iniquities, and will remember their sin no more,* Jer. xxxi. 33, 34. Heb. viii. 10, 11, 12. In which few words is contained all that God hath promised, and, indeed, all that we can desire. He first saith, *I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts:* which he elsewhere explains, by saying, *I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me,* Jer. xxxii. 40. *A new heart also will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you: and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them,* Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. Whereby he promiseth to give us such a measure of his grace and Holy Spirit, to influence and direct our hearts, that we shall be inclined of our own accord to do whatsoever he commands; and then he will be our God, to bless, preserve, and keep us: and we shall be his people, his peculiar people, zealous of good works, of all such works as he hath set us to do; which that we may, he will give us a right knowledge of himself and his holy will; so that we shall all know him from the least to the greatest, and all that he requires of us: and then he promiseth, in the last place, that we being thus qualified by him for it, he will forgive us all our

sins, that he will look upon us no longer as guilty, but as just and righteous persons, and therefore fit to live with him in glory, *for whom he justifieth, them he also glorifieth*, Rom. viii. 30. And our Lord himself saith, *The righteous shall go into life eternal*, Matt. xxv. 46. *This* therefore, as St. John observes, *is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life*, 1 John ii. 25. This is the substance, and this is the end of all his promises. They all tend to this, and centre in it.

Wherefore having the promise of God himself, let us but take his word, and trust accordingly upon him for all things necessary in order to it; and then as God's word is true, we cannot fail of obtaining this eternal life, which he hath promised in Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON XLIII.

CHRIST THE FOUNDATION OF ALL THE PROMISES.

2 COR. i. 20.

———*In him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.*

ALL Scripture being given by inspiration of God, it must needs be of infinite advantage to mankind, to whom it is given ; and so be sure it is in all points wherein it is possible for a writing to be of any real advantage to us : there we have the only infallible, as well as the most ancient history that is extant in the world, an history of things spoke and done from the beginning of it ; there we have a complete system of all such truths, as are necessary for men to know and believe, in order to their being eternally happy, all revealed and attested by God, by truth itself ; there we have a body of laws made, enacted, and published by the supreme Lawgiver of heaven and earth, for all his creatures upon earth to observe and keep ; there we have an impartial account of the punishments he hath heretofore inflicted upon those who transgressed his said laws, and such as he hath threatened against those who shall presume to do it hereafter ; there also we have the great charter of all the privileges, immunities, and favours, which he hath granted and promised to all his faithful people and servants, which itself is a matter of such infinite advantage and consequence to us, that if there was nothing else in it, we could never sufficiently value and prize that

writing in which it is recorded, even the holy Scripture, the only book that is in the world, where we have any promises that we can rely upon for grace and favour in the sight of God, upon any account whatsoever ; but there we have promises of all sorts made and confirmed by the almighty Governor of the world ; some to all his saints and servants, as they are a body united under one head, others to every single member of that holy communion ; some in a manner absolute, others upon such conditions as may easily be performed by us ; some for this life, others for that which is to come ; in short, we have there given us such *exceeding great and precious promises, that by them we may be partakers of the divine nature*, 2 Pet. i. 4. in this world, in the next of eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I say, through Jesus Christ our Lord, for it is in him that the promises are all made, or, as the apostle here expresseth it, *all the promises of God in him are yea* ; that is, they are all affirmed in him, so that without him, God would have denied us all manner of grace and favour, whereas in him, or upon his account, he hath promised or affirmed, that he will give us all we can desire. This is a thing much to be observed, but not so commonly understood as I could wish it was ; for it would be of great use towards the informing our judgments, and so to the exercising our faith aright in our blessed Saviour ; and therefore I shall endeavour to make it as plain as I can, in these following propositions.

I. When God made man, he at first made only one person, whom he called Adam, that is, man in general, because all men were then contained in him, and afterwards were to proceed from him, and so altogether may be truly called Adam, as the first man and his wife were both called, Gen. v. 2. And therefore when Adam eat of that fruit of which God had said, *In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die*, Gen. ii. 17 all men thereby became guilty and ob-

noxious to the death then threatened, and so fell from their first estate, into the displeasure of Almighty God, and all the judgments and curses which attend it ; according as it is written, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them*, Deut. xxvii. 26. Gal. iii. 10. But as all broke God's commandment in their first parents, so no man in his own person continueth in all things which are there written, *and therefore all men by nature are under the curse of God, and the children of his wrath*, Eph. ii. 3. and have no ground in themselves ever to expect any favour at his hands, but rather that he should every day more and more manifest his displeasure against them, for that they offend him every day more and more ; so that if we look upon mankind as in their degenerate and corrupt estate, howsoever some may flatter themselves, no man hath so much as one real blessing in the world, nor can ever hope for any ; for all things are accursed to all men, because he that made them, is angry with them all.

II. All mankind being thus brought into this cursed state by the fall of the first man Adam, God, to shew forth his grace and truth, raised up another Adam, or man in general, upon whom the death which he had threatened might be accordingly executed, and so the curse taken off to as many as would not continue in the same sin of unbelief, by which they fell at first. This he did by promising, that *the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head, and the serpent should bruise his heel*, Gen. iii. 15. For though this was not to be actually fulfilled till many years after, yet the promise being made by God himself soon after the fall of the first Adam, it was from that time of full force and virtue, as if it had been already fulfilled ; insomuch, that he who was then promised to be born of the seed of the woman, is called *second man*, 1 Cor. xv. 47 because he was promised before any other was born, as well as the *last Adam*, ver. 45. because he was the head

and representative of all mankind, as the first was ; but seeing the effect of this promise was to depend upon all men's belief of it, therefore God was pleased often to renew it by his prophets in all ages, till the time drawing near when it should be accomplished, the prophet Jeremiah said expressly, *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform the good thing that I have promised to the house of Israel, and to the house of Judah*, Jer xxxiii. 14. This was that good thing which he had promised, which is therefore called in a peculiar manner, *the promises made unto the fathers*, Acts xiii. 32. as being the greatest of all the promises, and that in which all the rest were comprehended.

III. Hence therefore, *when the fulness of time was come, God, according to his said promise, sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law*, Gal. iv. 4, 5. His Son, his only-begotten Son, therefore was made of a woman, born of her seed, and so took upon him the nature, not of any one or more particular men, but the nature of man in general, so as to become another Adam, and as such he suffered the death which God had threatened to the first, and he suffered it upon the cross too, the only death that had a curse entailed upon it, and so *redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us*, Gal. iii. 13. And seeing he who suffered this accursed death was not only man as the first Adam was, but God also in the same person, his death was not only equivalent to that which was threatened to all men in the first, but it was of that infinite worth and value, that he thereby not only took off the curse, but merited all manner of blessing for those who are of that nature in which he suffered it : he did not only redeem them that were under the law from the curse which was due unto them from the said law, but he did it so, *that we might receive the adoption of sons*, Gal. iv. 5. and if sons, then heirs of God, and of all the blessings which he, being now reconciled, and be-

come our most loving and gracious Father, can bestow upon us.

IV Lastly, Almighty God being thus reconciled to mankind by the death of his Son Jesus Christ, he for his sake therefore hath promised them all the blessings which were merited for them by his said death, so that it is only in him, and upon the account of his merits, that the promises were at first made, as the holy Scriptures all along testify Let us hear how that general promise made to Abraham runs, *In thy seed*, said God, *shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*, Gen. xxii. 18. *In thy seed*, that is, *in Christ*, as the apostle observes, Gal. iii. 16. It was in him therefore that God promised all nations should be blessed, or that all blessings should be conferred upon them in and through him, according to that of the apostle, *Blessed be God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places*, or things, *in Christ*, Eph. i. 3. It is still in Christ that we are blessed, according to the promise that God made in him, as the same apostle often teaches us, saying, *Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus*, 2 Tim. i. 1 And again, *That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ*, Eph. iii. 6. Elsewhere he saith, that *the covenant in which all the promises are contained was affirmed of God in Christ*, Gal. iii. 17 and that Jesus Christ was *a minister of circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers*, Rom. xv. 8.

To all which I shall only add, that to shew how this new covenant or system of divine promises is founded and confirmed in Christ, it is represented in holy writ under the name and notion also of a testament; and the apostle, speaking of it under that notion, saith, that *Christ is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgres-*

sions that were under the New Testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance ; for where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator, Heb. ix. 15, 16. Here Christ is represented as the testator. The eternal inheritance, and so all the blessings that are promised to mankind, are as so many legacies given them in his testament. But a testament supposeth the death of the testator, without which it is of no force, as the apostle there argues, ver 17. and therefore concludes, that it is by means of death, that death which he suffered for the redemption of transgressors, that the promise is received ; which plainly shews, that the promises are all founded upon him, and upon that death by which he suffered the curse which was threatened against the transgressors of God's law, and merited the blessings which are promised in the Gospel : so that if the Son of God had not been born of a woman, and when he was born, if the serpent had not bruised his heel ; that is, if he had not been put to death by the instigation of the devil, putting it into the heart of Judas to betray him, John xiii. 2. if this, I say, had not been done, mankind could never have hoped for any mercy from God ; for God would never have promised them any, no more than he did to the angels that kept not their first estate, whereas by means of his death the serpent's head is bruised, his power and all his wicked designs upon mankind are broken, for God is now reconciled and at peace with them ; and being *the God of peace*, he *will bruise Satan under their feet*, Rom. xvi. 20. He is now become gracious and merciful to them, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth ; and that he might manifest the abundance of his truth as well as goodness to them, he hath promised them all the good things they can desire to make them happy, but he hath promised them only for the sake of his beloved Son Jesus Christ, and upon account of that meritorious death which he suffered in their nature, and in

their stead, and therefore it is in him, as the apostle here saith, that *all the promises of God are yea*.

And as in him they are *yea*, so in him also they are *Amen* ; that is, as the word signifies in Hebrew, firm and stedfast, as certainly fulfilled, as they were established in him : he is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of all the promises ; they are all begun, continued, and finished in him, so as to be fulfilled exactly according to the nature and purport of each of them : for the understanding of which it will be necessary to consider, first, how the promises of God are always fulfilled ; and then, how they are fulfilled, always in Christ.

As for the first, we must distinguish between the absolute and conditional promises ; they which are made absolute, are always as absolutely performed. This God's faithful people have observed in all ages, and have taken particular notice of it ; how notwithstanding all the difficulties that have intervened, such as might seem to make it impossible, yet such promises were always fulfilled to a tittle, as we see in the promise that God made to Abraham, that his posterity should be delivered from the bondage of the Egyptians after four hundred and thirty years ; for notwithstanding all the strength and policy that was used to prevent it, yet it came to pass at the end of four hundred and thirty years, even the self-same day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt, Exod. xii. 14. The same king Solomon takes notice of in the promise which God had made to give the children of Israel quiet possession of the land of Canaan, saying, *Blessed be the Lord that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised : there hath not failed one word of all his good promises, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant*, 1 Kings viii. 56. So it is in all such promises ; there never fails one word of what he hath once said shall be, how great, how hard, how impossible soever it may seem to be.

The same may be said also of the promises which he hath made upon certain conditions, or to persons so and so qualified, as that he will pardon those who repent ; that he will give *rest to those who labour and are heavy laden* ; that he will add all *things needful for this life to those who first seek his kingdom* ; there is never any failure on God's part ; if the promise is not fulfilled, it is only because the condition is not performed ; the persons are not such to which the promise is made, and therefore it cannot be fulfilled to them ; but all who do what is required on their part, and are such to whom God hath promised any kindness, they are as sure of it as God is true. *Heaven and earth may pass away, but his word can never fail.*

But then we must observe withal in the next place, that as the promises are made, so they are fulfilled also in Christ : it was by means of his death, as we have shewn, that they were at first made and confirmed, and it is by means of his intercession that they are fulfilled, as we see in the great promise of the Spirit, of which St. John observes, that *the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified*, John vii. 39. And Christ himself, after his resurrection being assembled with his apostles, commanded them, that *they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me*, Acts i. 3. They must wait for it till he was got to heaven ; though the promise was made before, it could not be fulfilled it seems till then ; but he being soon after by *the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he shed it forth upon them*, Acts ii. 33. From whence it appears, that the fulfilling of the said promise depended upon his exaltation at the right hand of God, and the intercession which he is there continually making for his faithful people ; and whereas God hath promised both to give them grace to repent of all their sins, and also to pardon their sins when they have repented of them,

the apostle shews how these promises are fulfilled, where, speaking of Christ, he saith, *Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins*, Acts v. 31. For here we see that these great blessings which are promised by God, they are given by Jesus Christ, and they are given by him as he is exalted by the right hand of God to be a Prince and Saviour, and so vested with absolute power to give his people all things necessary to eternal life; yea, and eternal life itself, that also is in his gift, as he himself hath taught us, saying to his Father, *Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee; as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him*, John xvii. 1, 2. It is he therefore that gives eternal life, the greatest blessing that God ever promised, and that to which all the other promises tend; and he gives it, as he is glorified by the Father, for that end and purpose that the Father may be glorified by his giving of it; thus, all the blessings that God hath graciously promised, are effectually conferred upon us by our blessed Saviour, as he is now sitting at the right hand of God, and there appearing in his presence for us, our only Mediator and Advocate; and therefore it is written, *that grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*, John i. 17 because it is only in him that God hath promised us any grace or favour, and it is in him only that the truth of God appears in the performance of his said promises, or, as the apostle here expresseth it, *all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen.*

Some perhaps may think this is a matter only of theory or notion, not of practice or use; but none can harbour such a thought, but such as are without Christ, *being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world*, Eph. ii. 12. They having no interest in the promises, cannot make any use of

them themselves, and therefore may imagine that no use can be made of them ; whereas *they who are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God*, ver. 19. *these having tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come*, Heb. vi. 5. they find by their own experience, that the promises of God are the main support of their spiritual life ; that without them they could never live the life of faith, for they could have no foundation for it ; that without them they could never practise any duty aright, for they could never receive any strength or power to do it ; and therefore, that the doctrine of the promises, as it is delivered in holy writ, is of universal use and advantage to them, for instruction, advice, and comfort ; as it is to God for glory by us, as the apostle observes in the last words of my text. By us, that is, by those whom God is pleased to send and empower to publish and make known his promises to the world ; by these his glory is set forth and displayed in the world, the glory of his grace in making, and the glory of his truth in fulfilling, his said promises in his Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, without whom his grace and truth had never appeared ; whereas, in him they shine forth as gloriously in the world, as his wisdom, power, and goodness do in the creation and government of it.

And as this doctrine advanceth the glory of God, so it conduceth very much to our good and benefit ; for first, there are many useful and most comfortable lessons to be learned from it ; I shall instance only in two or three : first therefore, from what we have heard out of God's holy word, concerning his promises being made and confirmed to us only in Jesus Christ, we may learn what infinite cause we have to love and honour him, as the great foundation of all our hopes and expectations from Almighty God ; for being conscious to ourselves of our manifold sins and offences against his Divine Majesty, we cannot but be sensible withal, that we deserve not the least favour at his hands, but rather all the punish-

ments which his offended justice can inflict upon us; how then can we hope for mercy? No way certainly, but only because he hath promised it: but how comes he to make any such promises to us, more than to the fallen angels? Only because his only-begotten Son is a propitiation for our sins, and not for theirs; without which we could have had no more ground to expect any mercy from him than they have; that is, none at all; for God had never promised any to us, his promises being all made in Christ, and upon the account of what he was pleased to suffer for us. But in him he hath promised all the good things that we are capable of, and is always ready to bestow them upon us; *for he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* Rom. viii. 32. It is with him, and in him only that he gives them. What cause have we then to value and prefer him above all things we have, seeing it is by him only that we have them? *Therefore if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha,* 1 Cor xvi. 22.

From hence we may learn also what firm ground we have to believe and trust in the promises of God, seeing they were not only made by him who cannot lie, but are likewise confirmed in his only-begotten Son, who ever liveth to see them fulfilled. So that although either of them be enough, we have both the immutability of God the Father, and the all-sufficient merits and mediation of God the Son, whereupon to build our faith and confidence in them; that as the apostle argueth in the like case, by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge *to lay hold upon the hope set before us,* Heb. vi. 18. *which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an High-priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec,* ver.

19, 20. And being an High-priest for ever at the right hand of God, he is ever making atonement and reconciliation for those who believe in him, that all the blessings which he hath purchased for them with the price of his own blood, and which the Father therefore in him hath promised, may be accordingly conferred upon them; by which means, though in themselves they have none, yet in Christ they have the firmest ground that could be made, wherein to fix the anchor of their hope, and to put their confidence in the promises of God. To which I shall only add, that the promises being all made and fulfilled in Christ, we are thereby instructed in the great use and necessity of the sacraments which Christ hath ordained, not to confirm his promises to us, but to confirm our faith in them; they being as so many visible signs and pledges of the new covenant, in which all the promises are comprehended. The sacrament of baptism is of such necessity, that without that, we can have no right to the promises; for they being all founded in Christ, belong only to those who are made members of his body, which none can be any other way, than by being baptized into him according to his institution. But they who are so, have such an interest in all the promises of God, that they cannot fail of having them actually fulfilled to them, if they do but perform the easy conditions upon which they are made. And as for the sacrament of the Lord's supper, *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?* 1 Cor. x. 16. *Yes verily.* So that he who eateth this bread and drinketh this cup of the Lord worthily, partaketh of the body and blood of the Lord Christ, in whom the promises are all made, and so have them all actually fulfilled to him: the blessings promised being thereby communicated, made over, and applied particularly to him; which if all people were but as sensible of as some are, they would neglect no opportunities of receiving that

holy sacrament ; and they who do so, have too much cause to suspect, that they care not for any of the blessings which God hath promised, nor whether they live in heaven or hell hereafter, so they may but live in ease and plenty, and credit while they are in this world. This is plainly at the bottom of that gross neglect of this holy sacrament, which is so visible among us. But it is not long before all who are guilty of it will wish with all their souls they had not been so. But then wishing will do no good ; and therefore before it be too late, I desire you, when you are at leisure, to consider how you will answer this short question, If you matter not whether you have the mercies and favours which God hath promised in his Gospel or not, why do ye ever pray for them ? If you really desire to have them, why do not ye come to that ordinance where ye may receive them, and where Christ is always ready to bestow them upon all that come unto him for them ? That ye cannot doubt of, seeing, as ye have now heard, all the promises of God are both confirmed and fulfilled in him, and that you may there receive his body and blood as a pledge and earnest of them.

Neither may we receive only these and such like necessary instructions from this great doctrine, but such advice also, that if we take it, we shall live and be happy for ever ; for seeing it hath pleased the almighty Creator and Governor of the world to make us so many great and precious promises, and to confirm them in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we should therefore be advised to believe and trust on them with all our hearts, that being the great condition required on our parts towards their being performed to us ; for *the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe*, Gal. iii. 22. To them that believe it is given, and to none else, and to them only as they are believers, but to all them it is sure and certain ; *therefore it is of*

faith, saith the apostle, that it might be by grace, to the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the Father of us all, even of all the faithful, Rom. iv. 16. But what is that faith of Abraham to which the promise is surely performed? that the apostle there acquaints us with, saying, that he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was able also to perform; and therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness, Rom. iv. 20, 21, 22. This therefore is that faith whereby we attain the righteousness of God, with all the blessings he hath promised to it, when we do not stagger or doubt of what he hath promised, but are fully persuaded, that howsoever difficult or impossible it may seem, he both can and will perform it, and so give him the glory that is due unto his name, the glory of his power, by believing him to be able, as well as the glory of his truth, by believing him to be ready, to do what he hath said; whereas he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, 1 John v. 10. which is the highest affront that can be offered to his divine glory; and therefore all such make themselves not only incapable of his favours, but obnoxious to his displeasure; for seeing they will not take his word for what he hath promised in his Gospel, he will make it good in executing upon them all that he hath threatened in his Law; and so they also who would not believe shall find to their cost, that he is always true and faithful to his word; wherefore we must take special heed, that we never doubt of any thing that God hath said, but that we may be as fully persuaded of it in our minds as we possibly can be of any thing in the world; for the stronger our faith is in the promises of God, the greater will our share be in the blessing that he hath promised; as our Saviour said to

the two blind men in the Gospel, *according to your faith, so be it unto you*, Matt. ix. 29. The same is said in effect to every one of you; according to your faith in God, so is his grace and favour unto you; the more you believe in him, the more you receive from him; which David was so sensible of, that he made his prayer accordingly, saying, *Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in thee*, Psal. xxxiii. 22. So that if our faith fail not, all the devils in hell can never hurt us, nor *withhold any thing that is good from us*, Luke xxii. 32.

Let us therefore fear, *lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it by reason of unbelief*, Heb. iii. 19. iv. 1. *Cast not away your confidence, which hath a great recompence of reward*, chap. x. 35. *But let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for he is faithful that promised*, ver. 23. Yea, none of his divine perfections are more frequently celebrated in his holy word, than his truth and faithfulness, on purpose to confirm and strengthen our faith in him. Let us therefore rejoice and give honour to him, by putting our whole trust and confidence in him for all the good things that he hath promised, for he hath promised them who cannot lie, and he hath promised them in Jesus Christ, who also is *truth* itself, John xiv 6. *who ever liveth to make intercession for us*, Heb. vii. 25. and who himself too hath said, *that whatsoever we ask in his name, the Father will give it*, John xvi. 23. and that he himself will do it for us, chap. xiv. 14. And therefore whatsoever good things it hath pleased Almighty God to promise, let us but ask it in his name, and we have his word for it, that we shall have it; but *we must ask in faith, nothing wavering*, James i. 6. but firmly believing that he will do as he hath said, according to that remarkable saying of his to this purpose, *Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire,*

when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them, Mark xi. 24.

But what good things hath God promised to us? What hath he not promised? He hath promised all things necessary both for life and godliness; he hath promised to defend us from all evil, and to make all things work together for our good; he hath promised to be our God, and to make us his own peculiar people; he hath promised to pardon all our sins, and to accept of all the duties that we sincerely perform unto him; he hath promised his own grace and Holy Spirit to enlighten our understandings, to lead us into all truth, to sanctify or make us holy as he is holy; to fortify us against all temptations, to support and comfort us in all conditions, to direct us what to do, and to assist us in the doing of it; in short, he hath promised to give us eternal life, and all things requisite in order to it; and what can we desire more?

Having therefore these promises, *dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God,* 2 Cor, vii. 1. This is a great work, but we may well do it, seeing God himself hath promised to assist us in it, and to carry us through it; and this is the first thing that we ought to depend upon his promise for, and that upon which the performance of all his other promises, as to us, depends; for till we are cleansed and sanctified, and so adopted into his family, we can have no part or portion in any of the other blessings that he hath promised; wherefore our first and chief care must be, to live with a stedfast faith and trust on God, that he, according to the many promises that he hath made us to that purpose, will, upon our using the means that he hath appointed for that end, give us such a measure of his grace and Holy Spirit, whereby we shall partake of his divine nature, and be sanctified wholly in soul, body, and spirit; if we do that as we ought, we cannot

fail of having all such promises made good to us ; and then all the other blessings which he hath promised will follow in course, they being all made to every one that is so qualified, as if they were directed to him by name.

Who can hear this, and not rejoice and be glad that it has pleased the great God of heaven to make such promises to us, his sinful creatures upon earth ? There is nothing certainly on this side heaven, that affords so much matter of substantial joy and comfort, especially to those who have so much true reason and solid judgment, as to look upon God's word as the best security they can have for any thing in the world, and accordingly put their whole trust and confidence in him for every thing that he hath promised ; these are the happiest people upon earth, or rather the only people that are happy ; for while other people are tossed to and fro with every wind that bloweth, these are always stedfast as a rock ; they will not be afraid of evil tidings, for *their hearts are fixed, trusting in the Lord*, Psal. cxii. 7 *who never faileth them, who seek and trust to him*, Psal. ix. 10. *But saves and delivereth, and keepeth them in perfect peace, for that very reason, because they trust on him*, Psal. xxxvii. 40. Isa. xxvi. 3. Dan. vi. 23. *Trust ye therefore in the Lord for ever ; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength*, Isa. xxvi. 4. And he hath passed his word, he hath promised in Christ our Lord, *that they who believe and trust in him shall want no good thing* ; be advised therefore now to do it ; hark what he himself saith to every one particularly ; *Trust in the Lord, and do good ; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord ; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass : and he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day*, Psal.

xxxvii. 3, &c. *His truth shall be thy shield and buckler*, Psal. xci. 4. *Wherefore blessed are all they that put their trust in him*, Psal. ii. 12. *and in the promises that he hath made in Jesus Christ. To whom, &c.*

SERMON XLVI.

GOD OUR SOVEREIGN GOOD.

PSAL. lxxiii. 25.

Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.

ALTHOUGH there be many in the world that have much, there are none but who desire something which they have not; and men's desires are usually moved and excited by their fancies and opinions of things; according to which some desire the grandeur and glory, others the wealth and riches of this world; some desire skill in the liberal arts and sciences, others the knowledge of public transactions in their own or foreign countries; some desire to stay at home and mind their own business, others to go abroad and see the world; some desire strength and agility of body, others soundness and subtlety of mind; some desire the life and welfare of their friends, others the death or ruin of their enemies: thus some desire one thing, and some another, but every one something or other.

And I suppose that none of us here present can plead exemption from this general rule; but that we also have our several desires as well as other men, insomuch, that should God say to us as he did to Solomon, *Ask what I shall give thee*; every one of us would ask something of him, though not all the same: the sickly would ask health, the weak strength, and the sorrowful comfort;

the dumb would desire to speak, the deaf to hear, and the blind to see ; some would ask children, others that their children might be good and dutiful to them ; one would desire the riches, another the honours, a third the pleasures of this world. They that have little would ask much, they that have much would ask more ; and all would ask long life ; and so every one would desire something that he thinks would be good for him : but there are but few, I fear, that would desire the best thing, the greatest good of all. And what is that ? If it was left to our choice to ask any one thing in the world, and God himself should promise that we should have it, what should we desire of him ? Certainly every wise man, without any long pause, would desire of God nothing less, nothing else but himself, saying to him as David here doth, *Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee.*

As if he should have said, I know, O Lord, that there are many great, and good, and excellent things in heaven : there is the sun, the moon, and all the planets, that give light and heat to all things here below, and have so much power and influence upon all terrestrial bodies, that some have desired nothing so much as their benign aspects ; *but I desire none but thee.* There is an innumerable company of fixed stars shining and twinkling in their respective orbits, rising and setting, and moving continually in the order that thou hast set them ; what a rare thing would some think it to possess and govern any one, much more all those glorious lights of heaven : *but I desire none but thee.* There are many orders of angels, archangels, cherubin, seraphin, thrones, principalities, powers, dominions, all pure, spiritual, intellectual beings, always rejoicing, and praising, and flying about from place to place, to minister to thy servants upon earth, according to thy word and commandment : which many knowing, never think themselves safe, except they have one or more angels to guard them, and therefore fly to them for succour and

defence ; *but I desire none but thee.* Yea, there are the spirits too of just men made perfect, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob ; the prophets, and apostles, and martyrs, and saints of all ages, whom many court and caress upon all occasions, solemnly imploring their aid and assistance ; *but I desire none besides thee.*

I know also that there are many things upon earth, that are commonly esteemed at an high rate. There is a great deal of excellent ground that brings forth trees and plants, and fruits and flowers, and herbs of all colours, and smells, and tastes, and virtues, both for food and physic ; *but I desire none besides thee.* There is abundance of gold and silver, and pearl, and precious stones, hyacinths, and rubies, and amethysts, and jaspers, and emeralds, and diamonds of a great value in the eyes of mortals ; *but I desire none besides thee.* There are beasts and fowls of all sorts and sizes, and shades, and figures, and qualities, fit both for food or service, and likewise for pleasure and recreation ; *but I desire none besides thee.* There are men of great renown for their parts and learning, and usefulness in the world, eloquent orators, deep politicians, subtle disputants, grave philosophers, profound lawyers, skilful physicians, cunning merchants, and learned divines ; *but I desire none besides thee :* nay there are empires and kingdoms upon earth of a very large extent, with mighty princes and emperors presiding over them, which have millions of people, and vast armies under their command, and therefore are thought to be the happiest men upon earth, and the most able to make others so ; *but yet I desire none besides thee ; for whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth I desire but thee,* no thing, no person but thee, and thee alone.

I doubt there are not many, if any among us, who thus earnestly desire God above all things in the world ; but I am sure we ought all to do it, and that until we do it, we have made but little progress in the narrow path that leads to bliss ; neither is it possible for us to

make one true step in it, until we are got so far at least above this world, as to desire God more than all things in it; for so long as our affections are entangled among the creatures we converse with here below, and our desires are carried after them, more than after him that made them; as it is plain that we do not love him as we ought with all our hearts, so it is impossible that we should endeavour heartily to serve and honour him, because we have still something else in our eye, which takes up our thoughts, and captivates our mind, and so diverts us from our duty to him; whereas if our whole souls were inflamed with desires of God above all things else, all things else would never be able to take us off from striving all we can to please and enjoy him; so that as ever we desire to be or do good in the world, we must endeavour to raise up our minds so much above it, as to desire God before all things in it; which therefore that you may understand, at least how to do, I shall acquaint you with what I think necessary in order to it, and for that purpose shall consider,

I. What it is properly to desire God, and what it is in him that we should desire.

II. Why we should desire him above all things in heaven and earth, so as to desire nothing in comparison of him, nothing besides him.

III. How we may attain what we so desire, and by consequence have our desires accomplished.

The first thing to be considered is, What it is properly to desire God, or what it is in God that we ought to desire. In speaking to which, I suppose, I need not tell you what it is to desire a thing, for if you do but look every one in his own breast, and observe the several motions of his soul, you may easily perceive that when you judge or apprehend a thing to be good or convenient for you, and yet at some distance from you, so that you do not as yet possess it, your minds are always running upon it, and following after it, reaching as it were towards it, restless and unquiet until you have got

to it ; so as to be able to embrace and enjoy it ; and this is that affection or motion of the soul, which we call desire ; as when a man's mind is possessed with an high opinion of riches, as if they were the only, or at least the chiefest good in the world, his thoughts are then bent, his whole soul inclined towards them, his eye is always upon them, he studies and contrives all ways that lead towards them, he moils and toils, he runs through thick and thin, to come at them ; he hath no rest, no quiet in his mind, but is always moving and aiming at them, striving to get nearer to them, until, if it be possible, he hath got them into his hands. Such a man is truly said to desire riches.

And thus we ought to desire God, by having all the powers of our souls inclined and directed towards him, and the enjoyment of him ; being always uneasy and dissatisfied in our minds, till we get him to ourselves, in our own possession, that he may be really ours ; according to the tenour of the new covenant that he hath made with us, saying, *I will be their God, and they shall be my people*, Jer. xxxi. 33. Where he having promised himself to us, we ought to desire that this promise may be fulfilled ; that we may be his people, and that he may be our God. That we may be interested in him, and in all those infinite perfections that are concentrated in his divine essence : that they may be all ours, to make use of upon all occasions : that we may be able to say with him in the prophet, *In the Lord have I righteousness and strength*, Isa. xlv. 24. And with David, *The Lord is my rock and my fortress, and my deliverer ; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust, my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower*, Psal. xviii. 2. where we see how he appropriates God unto himself, and looks upon him as his own, yea positively asserts his right and interest in him.

And this is that which we ought to desire above all things in the world, even to have God to be our God :

that he would not only bestow what he hath upon us, nor only do what he can for us, but that he would give himself and all his divine properties to us, that they may be all employed for us, and so be reckoned ours in him; that his infinite wisdom may be ours, to contrive and order all things for our advantage, that nothing may happen to us, but what is the best for us in our present circumstances, and so we may not be only contented, but fully satisfied and well-pleased with it. That his almighty power may be ours to uphold us in our being, to defend us from all adversity, to protect us from our enemies, to preserve us both in soul and body from all evil, and to make all things work together for our good. That his patience and long-suffering may be ours to bear with our infirmities, and to put off the execution of his wrath upon us, till by hearty repentance and faith in Christ, we have obtained our pardon, and so be discharged from the sins whereby we have deserved it; that his mercy may be ours, to pardon all our said sins, upon our repentance and forsaking of them, and to cancel and make void all our obligations to punishment for them, by virtue of that death which his own Son underwent for them; that so we for his sake may be as perfectly acquitted from all our offences, as if we had never been guilty of any; that his justice and righteousness may be ours, to give us all the great blessings which Christ hath purchased for us with the price of his own blood, that we also may be accepted of as just and righteous before him, by means of that complete satisfaction and perfect obedience that was performed to him in our stead; that his goodness may be ours to do us and to make us good, to attract our love unto him, and to fix it so firmly upon him, that nothing may be ever able to withdraw it from him, but that we may always love him, as our chiefest, our only good; that his truth and faithfulness may be ours, to keep us always firm and stedfast in his true faith and fear, and to perform to us particularly all those great and pre-

cious promises which he hath made to mankind in general, and sealed with the blood of his only-begotten Son ; that his all-sufficiency may be ours, to relieve our necessities, to supply our defects, to support us under all our troubles, to strengthen us against all temptations, and to satisfy and fill our souls with all the good things that we want or desire ; that his purity and holiness may be ours, to make us pure and holy in all manner of conversation, like unto himself, conformable to his law, and partakers of his own divine nature ; that his omnipresence and omniscience may be ours, to be present every where for us, to see, and hear, and know whatsoever is done, or spoke, or designing against us in any part of the world, either by men or devils ; that it may be either prevented, or so accommodated to our temper and condition, as to do us no harm, but good ; and likewise that he may be always present with us, and ready upon all occasions to counsel and advise us, to succour and defend us, that no evil may fall upon us, nor we into any evil ; that his grace and favour also may be ours, to take off all our inclinations to sin, and to keep us from all occasions and temptations to it ; to excite us to our duty, to assist us in it, to carry us through it, and to accept of it when it is done for Christ's sake : in a word, that he himself would be ours, our God, under which is comprehended all that I have said already, and infinitely more than I am able to express or conceive ; and yet this we must desire ; if we would desire God as we ought, we must not only desire that he would do this, or that, or the other thing for us ; but we must desire himself ; as we can desire nothing more, we must desire nothing less than himself ; his own glorious, almighty, and eternal Godhead.

But here we must observe, that there being in the Godhead which we desire three distinct Persons, all and every of which is one and the same God, of the same nature, wisdom, power, justice, mercy, and all other divine perfections ; our desires must be equally

carried after each of these divine persons, according to the personal relation they have to one another, and the distinct operations, whereby they are pleased to manifest themselves to us: and it may not be unworthy our observation, that whensoever God promiseth to be our God, he always doth it by a word אלהים of the plural number, denoting the three Persons subsisting in the divine essence to be all and every one equally our God, according to their several ways of working; and so doubtless we ought to desire, that God the Father would be our God, that God the Son would be our God, and that God the Holy Ghost would be our God, according to their respective personal properties, whereby they are distinguished from one another, as well as their essential perfections, wherein they are absolutely one and the same.

First, We are to desire God the Father as such: that as he is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, so in him he would be our God and Father; according to that remarkable saying of our Lord to Mary, *Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God*, John xx. 17. Where as he calls the Father his God as well as his Father; so he calls him our Father as well as our God; and so all along in the Gospel our Saviour speaks of his Father under the same relation to us as he is to him: as where he saith, *Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*, Matt. v. 48. *Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly*, chap. vi. 18. *Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things*, chap. vi. 32. and frequently elsewhere; and for this we have the word also of the Father himself, saying, *I am a Father to Israel*, Jer. xxxi. 9. *And I will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty*, 2 Cor. vi. 18.

Now what God hath thus promised, we ought most earnestly to desire may be fulfilled to us, even that we

being regenerate and born again of him, and so made his children by adoption and grace, may have him to be our gracious and most merciful Father, and that he would carry himself as such to us through the whole course of our lives, that we may always have him our loving and compassionate Father, to pity our weakness and heal our infirmities, to take care of us and provide for us, to bless us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places, and to supply us continually with all things necessary both for life and godliness; to instruct us in what he would have us to believe and do, that we may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; to bring us up in the nurture and admonition of himself, that we may always live as becometh his dutiful and obedient children; to correct us when we do amiss, and encourage us in performing our duty to him; to keep us always under his wing, and preserve us from all danger and mischief; to make what provision he knows best both for our souls and bodies in this world, but give us our portion in the next, even that kingdom which our blessed Saviour speaks of, saying, *Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom*, Luke xii. 32. that so in all our straits and difficulties, in all our wants and necessities, in all our troubles and perplexities, in every state and condition of life, we may with an humble boldness address ourselves to him as to our Father which is in heaven, and so always rest secure under his paternal care and conduct. Who would not desire to have so great, so good, so rich, so kind, so merciful, so mighty, so almighty a Father as this?

But as we desire to be thus related to God the Father, so we must desire likewise to have an interest in God the Son, in all the great things that he hath done, and is still doing for mankind, *in all those treasures of wisdom and knowledge which are hid in him*, Col. ii. 3. in all the merits of his death and passion, and in all the blessings which he hath thereby purchased for us; *who*

of God, as the apostle saith, *is made to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*, 1 Cor. i. 30. wisdom to instruct and guide us ; righteousness to pardon and justify us ; sanctification, to make us pure and holy ; redemption, to make us free and happy. All which things are to be had only in and by him ; and therefore, as ever we desire them, we must desire him in whom they are so, as that if we have him, we have them, but without him, we can neither have them, nor any thing else we desire that is really good for us ; who therefore ought to be, as he is called, *The desire of all nations*, Hag. ii. 7. and as of all nations in general, so of every person in particular We must all and every one of us desire to have him for our only Saviour and Redeemer, our only Mediator and Advocate ; we must desire to have him, according to all the offices that he hath undertaken for us, as our Prophet, our King, and our Priest. We must desire to have him for our Prophet, to reveal his and our Father's will unto us and in us, that we may know every thing that he would have us believe, or think, or speak, or do ; that we may never displease him, but always continue in his love and favour. We must desire to have him for our King, to rule and govern our hearts and affections for us, to keep both our souls and bodies in a constant subjection to himself, to assist us against our ghostly enemies, and subdue them under us, to fight for us and with us all the while we are in the church militant, and at length to bring us to the church triumphant. We must desire to have him also for our Priest, to make atonement for our sins, and so to reconcile God to us, and us to him, that we may have our part and portion in that full and perfect sacrifice, which he by the one oblation of himself once offered for the sins of the whole world, that every one of us may be able to say with St. Paul, *that Christ loved me, and gave himself for me*, Gal. ii. 20. He gave himself for me to expiate my sins, by suffering in my stead all that shame, and pain, and punishment that

was due to me for them. And as he was delivered for my offences, he was raised again for my justification, and he is now my Advocate in heaven, there interceding with his Father for me, that *as he was made sin for me, so I may be made the righteousness of God in him*; and although I be not perfectly righteous in myself, yet may be accepted of in him, upon the account of what he hath done and suffered for me; which is so great, so exceeding great a privilege, whatsoever some may think, that St. Paul preferred it above all things in this world, saying, *what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ: yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith*, Phil. iii. 7, 8, 9. Where we may observe, how he despiseth and trampleth on all things upon earth as dirt and dung in comparison of Christ, and that righteousness which we have by faith in him, and how earnestly he desireth to have him rather than all things else.

And if we thus desire the Father and the Son, we cannot but desire the Holy Spirit too, as proceeding from them, and being of the same substance with them, and is therefore called sometimes, the Spirit of the Father, sometimes the Spirit of the Son, but most commonly the Holy Spirit, because all the holiness that we receive from the Father through the Son, is wrought in us by the operation of the Spirit; insomuch that, as the apostle tells us, *if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*, Rom. viii. 9. he is no true Christian, no good man; he has no interest at all in Christ, nor Christ in him. Hence therefore, as we desire that Christ should be our Saviour, we must desire likewise that his Holy Spirit would be our Sanctifier;

that as he is a most holy Spirit in himself, he would make our spirits also holy ; that we may have him always with us, and in us, to illuminate our understandings, and clear up our apprehensions of divine truths ; to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, rectify our wills, regulate our passions, awaken our consciences, direct our intentions, strengthen our resolutions, assist us in all our performances, comfort us in all our troubles, and sanctify us wholly in soul, body, and spirit. These are the great things which the Spirit of God doth, and none but he can do for us ; and therefore we ought to desire to partake of him, and to have both our souls and bodies influenced and governed by him all our days.

Thus we see, in short, how and upon what account we ought to desire God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, who being all equal in substance and glory, ought to be equally loved and desired by us ; from whence also you may see the reason why we generally sum up and conclude our prayers, with an hearty desire of these three Persons, saying, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore.*

SERMON XLVII.

THE PRESENT SECURITY AND FUTURE HAPPINESS OF
THE SAINTS.

LUKE xii. 32.

Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

FEAR is a passion that all mankind is naturally subject to, ever since our fall in Adam; he had no sooner transgressed the command of God, but the next news we hear of him is, that *he was afraid, and hid himself*, Gen. iii. 10.

And we being likewise conscious to ourselves that we have often offended him that governs all things, we are apt to think, that all things will concur, as they justly may, to punish us for it; this raiseth that passion or motion in our minds which we call fear, and which is therefore both the effect, and in some measure the punishment, of sin; for, as the apostle and evangelist observes, *fear hath torment*, 1 John iv 18. it puts the mind into such disorder, that we are in pain, restless and uneasy, while we are apprehensive and fearful of any danger or evil, as all have continual cause to be, who continue in the state of sin, and by consequence under the displeasure of Almighty God; for so long as he is displeased with them, all the judgments which he hath threatened, and they have deserved, are ready every moment to be executed; and whether they do or no, they have always cause to fear that some or other, if not all together, will fall upon them.

But they who, upon their repentance and faith in Christ, are reconciled to God, they neither ought, nor need to fear any evil whatsoever; for he hath commanded them to fear nothing but himself, and hath promised to preserve them from all evil, and so hath given them sufficient ground to turn all their fear into the contrary passion of hope and trust on him, and expects that they accordingly do it; and so they will if they live as they ought; and as all such endeavour to live with a firm belief in him and his holy word, for faith and fear are directly opposite to one another, the greater our faith is, the less is our fear; the greater our fear, the less our faith; and therefore when the disciples, being in a storm on the sea, feared lest they should be overwhelmed with the waves, our Saviour said to them, *Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?* Matt. vii. 26. implying, that if their faith had been wholly fixed, as it ought to have been, in God, they would not have been fearful, notwithstanding the greatness of the danger they seemed to be in; and as he positively requires us all along to believe in God and in himself, according to the promises which he hath made us; so whensoever he saw his disciples in any doubt, or fear of what might happen to them, he checked and rebuked them for the *weakness of their faith*, particularly in this very chapter, ver. 28. where he also commands them to *fear nothing but God*, ver. 4, 5. and backs his command with the consideration of God's special providence over all things that are, even the very birds of the air, and the hairs of every man's head; and then he adds, *fear ye not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows*, ver. 6, 7 whereby he puts them in mind of the great value that Almighty God himself sets upon those who fear and honour him; he hath a particular kindness for them, and therefore they need not fear any thing in this world; forasmuch as he that governs and orders all things in it, will take care that nothing shall hurt them.

But he knowing our temper, how ready this passion

is to rise in us upon all occasions, and how much it disturbs our minds, and hinders us in the exercise of those heavenly graces and virtues which he requires of us, he repeats the same command again in my text, and enforceth it with such reasons, which, if duly considered, would prevent or suppress all manner of cares and fears in us, about any thing in this world, saying, *Fear not, little flock ; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

Before, he speaks of the troubles and persecutions which his disciples would meet with from men, and commands that they do not fear them ; but here he speaks in general ; fear not, fear nothing at all in this world, nothing but God himself ; he would not have them indulge any sort of fear of any thing or person whatsoever upon earth, nor trouble their heads about what may or may not happen to them, but always to believe and trust on God and the promises that he hath made them, to defend them from all evil, and order all things so as shall be most for their benefit and advantage.

This I confess may seem very difficult to our corrupt nature, but the reason is, because our nature is corrupt ; in the state of innocence, when there was no evil of sin, there could be no fear of any other evil ; but our blessed Saviour, the last Adam, came to restore us to the same state from which we fell in the first, and the nearer we come by him to that, the freer we shall be from sin, and from all the mischiefs that follow upon it, of which, fear itself is one of the greatest in this life ; so that could we get rid of that, by a stedfast faith in God our Saviour, we should enjoy as much peace and comfort as we are capable of in this imperfect state.

And verily unless we strive all we can to overcome, or at least by his assistance to keep under, those groundless cares and fears that men are generally tormented with, we have made but little progress in his school, who

takes all occasions to teach his scholars or disciples this great lesson, and expects that they all both learn and practise it : *Let not your hearts be troubled*, saith he ; *ye believe in God, believe also in me*, John xiv. 1. *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you ; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let it be afraid*, ver 27 And so frequently elsewhere ; not that he would have us indulge a stoical apathy or insensibleness of danger, but that we should not suffer our minds to be discomposed at the apprehension of it, but support ourselves under it with a stedfast belief and trust on him, either to prevent, or bless it to us. And therefore, at the same time that he commands us not to fear, he lays before us such considerations, as are proper to move his disciples as such, to obey that command, saying, first, *Fear not, little flock* ; he speaks not to the whole herd of mankind, but to his own flock only. Other people are never out of danger, and therefore have always cause to fear, and could not choose but do it, if they saw the danger they are in ; and therefore our Saviour doth not say to them, *fear not*, but to such only as believe in him, own him for their Lord and Master, and accordingly serve and honour him as such. These he calls his flock, because they belong in a peculiar manner unto him, and he feeds and leads them as a shepherd doth his flock, till he hath brought them to a place of rest. *He shall feed his flock*, saith the prophet, *like a shepherd ; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young*, Isa. xl. 11. *They were once as sheep going astray, but are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls*, 1 Pet. ii. 25. *To the great Shepherd of the sheep*, as he is called, Heb. xiii. 20. *And the good Shepherd, that giveth his life for the sheep*, John x. 11 He purchased them to himself with his own blood, and so hath an absolute right and title to them : he looks

upon them as his sheep, and they upon him as their shepherd; and therefore as he leads them, they follow him.

Let us hear what he himself saith in this very case. *He that entereth in by the door is the Shepherd of the sheep; to him the porter openeth, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calleth his own sheep by their name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice; and a stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers,* John x. 2, 3, 4, 5. In which words there are two things especially, much to be observed. First, what special notice this good Shepherd taketh of all his sheep. He calleth them all by their names; how many soever they be, he hath the names of every one written in the book of life, and can call them by it; taking as much care of every one particularly that belongs to him, as if he had none to mind but that one; which is such a comfort to his faithful people, that they need no other to banish all their fears, and to fill them with joy unspeakable and full of glory. But then we must observe withal, that as he knows them, so they know him, and hear his voice; they know his voice from all others; and therefore how many soever may pretend to come in his name, and by that means seduce other people into all manner of damnable errors and heresies, yet they can never get over any of Christ's sheep to them, for they know not the voice of strangers; and therefore the more they call, the more the sheep will flee from them. But they know the voice of their great Shepherd so well, that whensoever he calls, they come; whatsoever he bids them do, they do it; whithersoever he goes, they follow him; and keep as close as they can to the steps wherein he goes before them, without going aside, to the right hand or to the left. They learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart, to go about doing good, and to finish the work which God hath given them to do, even to glorify him

in the world. And as long as they thus follow him, they need not fear either want, or wolves, or any thing that can do them harm ; but may always sing with David, *The Lord is my shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing. He shall feed me in a green pasture, and lead me forth besides the waters of comfort. He shall convert my soul, and bring me forth in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil ; for thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff comfort me,* Psal. xxiii. 1, 2, 3, 4.

The flock of Christ, therefore, need fear no evil : no, not although it be but a little flock, as he himself here calls it, saying, *Fear not, little flock.* Though it be large in itself, it is but little in comparison of other flocks. The far greatest part of mankind flock after the world, the flesh, or the devil. There are but few that follow Christ in the way that leads to life ; for as he himself, who best knows it, saith, *Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it,* Matt. vii. 14. And, *many are called, but few chosen,* chap. xx. 16. But as the children of Israel were very few in comparison of the rest of mankind ; yet so long as they continued his people, God defended them against all the world, and commanded them not to fear, notwithstanding the smallness of their number, and weakness of their estate, saying, *Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men,* or rather (as the word signifies) *ye few men of Israel ; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel,* Isa. xli. 14. So here, the same good Shepherd of Israel, the Lord our Redeemer, saith to his faithful people, *Fear not, little flock ;* implying, that although his flock be but little and weak, yet he, the Shepherd, is great and mighty to save. And therefore he would not have them fear, although they be but few, but rather rejoice and be glad, that they are in the number of the few that shall be saved ; for they being admitted into his little flock, they need not fear but he will set them at the last day

among the sheep on his right hand, to which he will say, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world,* Matt. xxv. 34.

Where we see, he doth not only promise them a kingdom, but assures them likewise, that they shall have it by way of inheritance, saying, *Inherit the kingdom*; implying, that they shall have the kingdom, as they are the children and heirs of God. The same thing he puts them in mind of in my text, to keep them from fearing any thing, saying, *Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

It is your Father's good pleasure; his Father, it seems, is their Father too, and therefore theirs, because his. *As many as receive him, to them he gives power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe in his name,* John i. 12. They receive him, and believe in his name, and therefore receive power from him to be regenerate and born again of God, and so become his sons too. He is the only-begotten of the Father, begotten of him from all eternity, and they being found in him, in him have one and the same Father that he hath; for both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, *I will declare thy name unto my brethren,* Heb. ii. 11, 12. And to Mary Magdalen, *Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God,* John xx. 17. This he said a little before his ascension into heaven, that his faithful people in all ages until his coming again may know it from his own mouth, that God is their Father as well as his, and their God as well as his, and therefore theirs, because his. And for the same purpose, he commands them in their daily prayers to address themselves to God, as to their Father which is in heaven, that so they may keep this always in their minds, that in him, Almighty God is their heavenly Father

And verily, could we always do so, could we keep this continually in our minds, that God himself is our Father, of what mighty use would it be to us ? how would it animate and encourage us in performing our duty to him ; and arm us against the fear of any thing that can assault us ? For what need they fear, who have the almighty Governor of all things for their Father ? Their Father, the nearest relation that can be to them ! Methinks the very thoughts of it should make us all long to be in the number of those blessed souls who have such a Father ; for if he be their Father, howsoever he may see good to deal with other people, he will be sure to take care of them that are his own children, that nothing may hurt them, nothing but what shall some way or other do them good, upon that very account, because he is their Father, and they his children ; so that, instead of fearing, they have rather cause to be always praising God, and singing with the royal psalmist, *The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom then shall I fear ? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom then shall I be afraid ?* Psal. xxvii. 1

Behold then, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we shall be called the sons of God, 1 John iii. 1. For if sons, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, Rom. viii. 17 All his children are his heirs, heirs of his kingdom. For he doth not divide it among them, giving to some one part, to others another, but every one inherits the whole ; neither have they any cause to fear that any thing can hinder their having possession of it, seeing Christ himself assures them, that it is their *Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom.*

If they were to acquire this kingdom by their own power, or purchase it with their own merits, they might well despair of their accession to it ; for what can they do whereby to obtain or deserve such a kingdom as this ? Though we suppose them to be admitted into the flock of Christ, and so are got into the way that leads by his

direction to it ; yet they cannot walk in that way without stumbling ; though they press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ, they can never reach it by their own strength ; though they do all they can, they can do nothing as they ought, much less can they do more than is required, and so merit any thing by what they do ; but when they have done all, they are still but unprofitable servants, so far from deserving a reward, that they deserve rather to be punished for it. And if they can merit nothing by what they do, how can they merit all things, even the kingdom of God itself ? They who are truly his children, are so far from entertaining any such groundless conceits, that they look upon themselves as unworthy of the least of all his mercies ; and therefore if they look no farther than themselves, they see too much cause to fear, that they shall never enter into his kingdom.

But howsoever, our blessed Saviour here bids them not to fear, and that for this great undeniable reason, because it is their Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom ; whereby he assures them, that this kingdom which they are to have is not to be bought or purchased by them, but that it is given by God, that he will give it them, as he is their Father, and that too merely out of his fatherly love and kindness to them ; to the same purpose is that of his apostle, *the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord*, Rom. vi. 23. It is the gift of God, and he gives it them, not for any merit or desert in them, but through Jesus Christ our Lord, who himself also is therefore said to give it, for so he himself saith to his Father, *As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him*, John xvii. 2. God the Father first gave his Son, and God the Son gave himself that they might hear it ; then the Father gives them unto the Son, and the Son gives it to them ; so that all along, from first to last, it is the free gift of God ; wherefore they who are really of the flock of

Christ, and in him the children of God, if they do but sincerely endeavour all they can to believe and live as he hath taught them, notwithstanding all their faults and imperfections, they need not fear but they shall have the kingdom here promised, as certainly as if they were already possessed of it : need not, did I say ? they ought not to fear it, seeing Christ himself here saith, *Fear not, little flock ; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

But what is that kingdom which he will give them ? That appears sufficiently from our Saviour's calling it absolutely the kingdom, and so implying it to be that kingdom which so far exceeds all other that go under that name, that none else deserveth to be called so in comparison of that, which therefore can be no other but that which in other places is called the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, the crown of righteousness, the crown of glory, the crown of life, and eternal life. These are great titles, and represent this kingdom to us, as well as words can do it, but they come far short of giving us a full description of it ; for there are no words to be found in any language which can do that ; for, as it is written, *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things that God hath prepared for them that love him*, 1 Cor. ii. 9. And if they never entered into the heart, they can much less be expressed by the tongues of men : when St. Paul *was caught up into paradise, he heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful*, or rather, as the word there signifies, not possible, *for a man to utter*, 2 Cor. xii. 4. The things he heard, it seems, as well as what he saw, could not be declared by himself, much less by any other man ; though we have words whereby to signify our thoughts to one another upon earth, we have none whereby to express the joys of heaven, of which we know nothing but what is revealed ; and little of that any farther than that it is revealed ; so that although we can talk of it to one another, yet we have no clear no-

tion of what we say, nor are capable of it, any farther than as our minds are cleansed and purified, and so restored to the like temper with the inhabitants of that holy place. As none upon earth are perfectly happy, and few in any measure at all, and therefore all that can be said of this kingdom will have little effect upon the greatest part of those who hear it; howsoever, seeing our blessed Saviour is pleased to give this as the great reason wherefore his little flock should not fear, even because *it is their Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom*; for the right understanding of the words, it will be necessary to consider the great happiness which is here, as it is in other places of holy Scripture, promised to them under the name and notion of a kingdom.

A kingdom among us is a country or tract of land, where many people live under one common head or governor, called a king, or sovereign; there are many such upon earth, and that which is in heaven is so far like them, that all who live there, live under the power and dominion of one supreme head, the Lord God Almighty, who though he reign over the whole world, yet was in a more especial manner the King of Israel, so long as they continued his people, and so he is in a peculiar manner the King of saints, of all the saints; they own him to be so in the song which St. John heard them singing; *Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints*, Rev. xv. 3. And as there are some empires or kingdoms, particularly that of Germany, upon earth, where though all own the king or emperor for their head or sovereign, yet there are some among them who are kings or sovereign princes within their own dominions; so the saints, notwithstanding that they are entirely subject to God, yet they are also made kings as well as priests unto him by Christ their Saviour, Rev. i. 6. v. 10. They are all subject to the King of kings, and yet every one of them also is a king in respect of all the rest

of the world, all things else being subject unto every one of them ; *for every one inherits all things*, Rev. xx. 7. All things are settled upon them while they are upon earth, as St. Paul told the saints at Corinth ; *All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come ; all are yours*, I Cor. iii. 21, 22. That is the reason why all things are continually at work for them, *for all things work together for good to them that love God*, as the saints be sure all do, Rom. viii. 28. And though they cannot see it at present, when they come to heaven they will clearly understand how all things concurred to bring them thither, and will there enjoy all the true satisfaction and solid pleasure that any thing in the whole world can afford them ; so that the kingdom which their Father is pleased to give them hath no bounds or limits, like those upon earth, but extends and spreads itself over the whole creation, and all things in it.

Wherefore in this kingdom there is never any scarcity or want of any thing, but the greatest plenty that can be imagined, and abundance of all things that can be desired ; for they can desire nothing but they have it, or rather they cannot properly desire any thing at all, all things being theirs already. Neither can they be ever troubled with any cares or fears, being fully assured, that no evil can ever happen to them, nor any thing they have be taken from them ; from whence also it follows, that there is never any strife or contention, much less any wars or tumults among them, but they constantly live in perfect unity and peace together ; for as they are all of that sweet and loving temper, that they would not fall out if they could, so neither could they if they would ; for every one having all things he can desire, there is nothing for them to fall out or contend about.

To this we might add something concerning the pleasures which this kingdom affords those who dwell in it ; but they are so many, that they cannot be numbered ;

so high, that they cannot be reached ; and of such a nature, that they cannot be conceived by any but those who feel them ; only we may be sure that they are never sad or melancholy, never discomposed or out of tune, but are always pleasant and cheerful, always rejoicing and singing, and praising God for the wonderful works which he hath done ; we can look upon them without any regard or concern, but they see such infinite wisdom and power and goodness in every thing that God hath made, that they are mightily pleased and delighted with the contrivance and design of it. And so they are with the clearer sight they have of his infinite goodness and truth, shining forth in the redemption of mankind by his only-begotten Son, and particularly in his bringing them by him through all the changes and chances of this mortal life, to his heavenly kingdom, where they live *with him their ever-blessed Redeemer*, and see the glory which the Father gave him before the foundation of the world : and in and through him enjoy not only all things that God hath made, but him also that made them. They see him as he is : they *see him face to face* : they see him as clearly as it is possible for finite creatures to see their infinite and almighty Creator. It is by his own light they see him ; by the *light of his countenance shining continually upon them*, in them, all over them, and so overspreading their whole souls with such a sight and sense of his glory and goodness, that they are not able to contain themselves, but are always singing forth his praises, and crying to one another, *Hallelujah, praise ye the Lord*.

But here we must stop ; thus far we may go, being led by the word of God, but know not how to proceed any further in describing this glorious kingdom, called the *crown of righteousness*, 2 Tim. iv. 8. and the *crown of glory*, 1 Pet. v. 4. *The righteous there being all so full of glory, that they shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father*, Matt. xiii. 43. *They were*

once like us sinful mortals upon earth, but now they are equal to the angels, Luke xx. 36. The holy angels, those glorious creatures, which we could not look upon without fear and trembling, if any of them should appear unto us ; but the saints above are fellow-citizens with them, of the same family, and therefore converse familiarly with them, as we do with one another, and join continually with them in setting forth the praises of their great Creator, for all the marvellous works that he hath done, and particularly the angels, for his keeping them in their first estate, and the saints for his restoring them unto it.

But that which adds a great lustre to the glories of this kingdom is, that *it is a kingdom which cannot be moved*, Heb. xii. 21. *an everlasting kingdom*, Psal. cxlv. 13. A kingdom that never fades or decays either in the whole or in any part of it, but always continues in the same flourishing state and condition, not only to the end of the world, but to all eternity. This the blessed inhabitants of this glorious kingdom are fully assured of ; and therefore as they have all they can desire, they never fear losing any thing they have, but are fully persuaded and confident, that they shall always live as they do, in perfect peace, and joy, and glory, for ever and ever.

Blessed and thrice happy is that little flock that have such a Father, who will give them such a kingdom as this ! what need they fear if all the kingdoms upon earth should be turned upside down, they may stand upon the ruins and say, we have lost nothing ; our kingdom, our all, is just as it was ; and so it will be, whatsoever becomes of this world and all things in it : come what will come, it is all one to us ; our Father has said that he will give us the kingdom, and therefore we are sure that nothing can keep us from it ; nothing can happen but what shall help to bring us to it ; and what are all the kingdoms of this world to that ? they shall perish, but ours shall

abide for ever : therefore we will not fear, we will fear nothing upon earth, for it is our Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom, the kingdom of heaven itself.

But shall the little flock of Christ have this glorious, this mighty, this eternal kingdom ? Who then would not be of that little flock ? blessed be God, there is never a soul here present, but as yet may be of it if he will. The great Shepherd invites all to come into it ; and hath promised that he will refuse none that come. *Him that cometh to me*, saith he, *I will in no wise cast out*, John vi. 37 Wherefore in his name, and for your own sake as well as his, be advised to stand out no longer, but come while ye may into his little flock, into the number of those few, who do not only profess to believe in him, but really do it, and manifest they do so by following him as their leader, by obeying him as their Lord and Master, and trusting on him as their only Saviour, Mediator, and Advocate with the Father to make their peace with him, and what they do acceptable in his sight, to guide, direct, and assist them in serving and honouring him through the whole course of their life on earth, and then to bring them to the kingdom which he hath purchased and prepared for them in heaven.

And certainly it is your interest, as well as duty, to make this the chief care and study of your whole lives : for remember, it is not a little money or land you labour for, but a kingdom ; not such a kingdom as those upon earth, which have more trouble than pleasure in them, but the kingdom of heaven, which is all pleasure without any trouble at all ; and never fear that your labour shall be in vain : be but of that little flock, that sets themselves in good earnest upon doing what God hath commanded, and you cannot miss of the kingdom that he hath promised ; for remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, *Fear not, little flock ; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom*,

SERMON XLVIII.

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

EPH. ii. 19.

*Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners,
but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the house-
hold of God.*

OUR blessed Saviour having commanded that all nations should be made his disciples, by being baptized *in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*, all that are so baptized were always reckoned in the number of his disciples or Christians ; which being all considered together as a body of men distinct from the rest of the world, make up that which we call Christ's holy catholic church ; holy, because it professeth that holy faith and religion which he hath revealed to the world ; and catholic or universal, because it consisteth of all Christian people that ever did or ever shall live in any part of the universe. That there is such an holy catholic church, is one of the articles of the Christian faith, contained in the Apostles' Creed, and all Christians in all ages have all the reason that can be to believe it, in that Christ himself hath said, *The gates of hell shall never prevail against his church*, Matt. xvi. 18. But this church, though as it is a body, the body of Christ, it is holy as well as catholic, yet nevertheless while it is militant here on earth, there are many unsound, unholy members in it, many who neither believe nor live according to their holy profession. Christ himself com-

pares it to a *field* where *tares* are sown as well as *wheat*, Matt. xiii. 24, 25. to a *net* that takes in *all sorts of fish*, both *good* and *bad*, ver. 47 and to a *marriage-feast*, at which some *have* and some *have not* a *wedding-garment*, Matt. xxii. 10, 11. Thus within the pale of the church there are always false as well as true believers, sinners as well as saints; but still in all ages there are some who really believe and live according as they are there taught, and so may be truly called saints, and are esteemed such by God himself; and therefore in the foresaid Creed, after the profession of our belief, that there is an holy catholic church in the world, we immediately add, the communion of saints, to express our belief, that in the said church there are some that are real saints, and as such have fellowship or communion among themselves, distinct from the rest of mankind; which being one of the great articles of our faith, and yet not so commonly understood as it ought to be, I shall endeavour to make it as plain as I can, from the words which I have now read.

The apostle having put the Ephesians in mind of the sad condition they were in so long as they continued Gentiles, that *at that time they were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world*, ver. 12. he then acquaints them how much the case was altered with them, upon their conversion to the faith of Christ, that by him, they who before were far off, are now made near and reconciled to God, as well as the believing Jews, being made one body with them; so that through Christ both Jews and Gentiles, even all that believe, *have an access by one Spirit unto the Father*, ver. 18. From whence he draws this conclusion in my text, *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God*.

Whence he plainly takes it for granted, that there are

such persons in the world which are real saints, that these are all incorporated, so as to be a community or society, distinct from all other, a kind of city, or body politic of themselves; that all who are not saints, are strangers and foreigners, or, as it is before expressed, *aliens to the commonwealth*, or rather, as it is in the original, to the polity, *of Israel*; they are not free of the said city, nor have any right to the privileges of it; but that when any of the sinners become saints, they are in course admitted to the freedom of this city, so as to be fellow-citizens with all other saints, of the same communion or fellowship with them.

This is a noble subject, which, rightly understood and considered, will not only afford extraordinary matter of joy and comfort to those who are saints already, but will be of mighty force also to encourage and excite us to do all we can to get into the number of them; and therefore I shall endeavour to bring it down, as near as I can, to the meanest capacities in the congregation.

For which purpose we must first observe, that by saints we are to understand such only as by a quick and lively faith in Christ have their hearts freed from all vicious habits, and purified to that degree, that they really love God above all things, and fear nothing so much as his displeasure; and therefore make it their constant care and study to please him, to serve, honour, and obey him, walking in all his commandments and ordinances to the utmost of their power blameless, so as to be holy according to their capacities, as he who hath called them is holy, in all manner of conversation; and yet after all, believe or trust only in the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, whereby to be justified or accounted righteous or saints before God; these are all the saints of the most high God, and no other persons in the world are so.

But then we must observe withal, that no man can become such a Saviour or holy person, but only by the Holy Spirit of God; for all men at first are born in sin,

and always continue in the same state, *except they be born again of water and of the Spirit*, John iii. 5. If they be born again of water, or baptized according to Christ's holy institution, they are thereby made members of his holy catholic church; but that they may be also of the communion of saints, they must be born again likewise of the Spirit, which proceedeth from Christ the head of the church, and is there communicated by him to all that truly believe in him, and to none else, John vii. 39. It is by this means only that they are regenerate, sanctified, and made new creatures, and so brought out of the state of sin into the state of holiness and salvation, according to that of the apostle, *not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour*, Tit. iii, 5, 6. *having from the beginning chosen us to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth*, 2 Thess. ii. 13. From hence we must first observe, that seeing all that are made saints, are made so by the Spirit of God, as they have all the *fellowship of the Spirit*, Phil. ii. 1 2 Cor. xiii. 14. so by him we have fellowship both with the Father and Son, whose Spirit he is; and seeing they are all made saints by one and the same Spirit, they must needs have fellowship also one with another. This we are taught by the same Spirit in St. John, saying, *that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ*, 1 John i. 3. And *if we walk in the light* (which all that have the Spirit do) *as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another*, ver. 7 as all the members of the same body have, by being informed and actuated by one and the same soul.

This therefore is the foundation and reason of this great article of our faith, the fellowship or communion

of saints : for seeing they have all access by one Spirit to the Father, Eph. ii. 18. and by one Spirit are all baptized into one body, 1 Cor. xii. 13. therefore as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office ; so the saints being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another, Rom. xii. 4, 5. and therefore they all have the same fellowship with one another as the members of the same body have, being all quickened, influenced, and governed by the same Spirit ; by which means among them all, *there is but one body, and one Spirit, even as they are all called in one hope of their calling ; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in them all*, Eph. iv. 4, 5, 6. which shews the strictest union, the nearest relation, and most intimate communion of all saints, that can possibly be among any creatures whatsoever ; which is therefore sometimes expressed by their being all of the same family, the household of God, as it is here called ; sometimes by their being all brethren, *for being all born of God, they are all alike his children, and so constitute a divine fraternity, or brotherhood among themselves*, 1 Pet. ii. 17

But that which I design to speak to more especially, is their being all fellow-citizens ; for seeing they who are sanctified are here said to be made fellow-citizens with the saints, the saints must needs be fellow-citizens to one another, all of the same city, the most renowned city in the world, called in holy writ, *the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem*, Heb. xii. 22. and *Jerusalem which is above and is free, and which is the mother of us all*, Gal. iv. 26. This is the metropolis or mother-city of all the saints, of which they are all free, and none but they ; but they are all fellow-citizens there, and so are a spiritual corporation, a body politic of themselves, distinct from all the world besides ; for the understanding of which, we shall briefly consider the extent, the nature, the government, the

laws, the trade or business, the public assemblies, the privileges, and the strength of this holy city.

First therefore we must know that this is a city of very large extent; it reaches as far as from earth to heaven, and so is divided into two parts, the upper and the lower. The upper city I call that which is in heaven, which is as much the larger as it is the higher part of this holy city. *There are many mansions in it*, John xiv. 2. enough for all that ever were, or shall be, or can be sanctified, and so made fit to dwell there; and although we have cause to fear there may be more at least of mankind in the regions of darkness, yet we cannot doubt but the inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem are already so many, that no mortal man is able to count them. For the apostle tells us, that besides an *innumerable company of angels*, there is *the general assembly and church of the first-born*, and *the spirits*, all the spirits, *of just men made perfect*, Heb. xii. 22, 23. And in a transient glance that St. John had of the place, besides an hundred forty and four thousand of all the tribes of Israel, he *beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues*, Rev. vii. 9. There are Moses and Elias, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the servants of the most high God that ever lived and died in his true faith and fear, from the beginning of the world to this day; they are all now there, as really there as we are here, and their number is continually increasing by some or other of their fellow-citizens that are always going up to them from this lower part of their city, that is situated here upon the earth, and extends itself to all the corners of it; all that are sanctified by faith in Christ Jesus, where-soever they live upon the face of the whole earth, they are all free of the same city, and have the same right and title to all the privileges of it, as they have who are already got into the upper part, and enjoy them perfectly; and these doubtless are many more than we

imagine; in the worst of times, when the church upon earth seemed to be wholly overspread with idolatry, insomuch that Elijah the prophet thought there were none but he left; yet God knew, that there were *seven thousand in Israel that had not bowed the knee to Baal*, 1 Kings xix. 18. And so it is at this day, though we cannot sufficiently lament the corruption of the age we live in, yet nevertheless, we cannot but at the same time believe there are many in it, not only among ourselves, but in all parts of the earth where the Gospel is preached, *who by it have their eyes opened, and are turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, so as to receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ Jesus*, Acts xxvi. 18. These are all of the communion of saints, all fellow-citizens both with those which are with them upon earth, and with those which are in heaven, whither they also go as soon as their course is finished here, but still others are come in their rooms; that as there will be an holy catholic church, so there may be a communion of saints upon earth also, in all ages to the end of the world, when their number being completed, they will all live in perfect love, and peace, and joy together, in that great and holy city, the new Jerusalem that is above, for evermore.

But we must not think this to be like any of the cities we see in this world, for this is properly the kingdom of Christ, which he himself saith *is not of this world*, John xviii. 36. Neither are any of the citizens as such of this world; no, not they which are still in it; *they are not of the world*, saith he, *even as I am not of the world*, chap. xvii. 14, 16. Though they are in the world, they are not of it; as a citizen of one city may live in another, and yet not be free of it, nor properly of it, but a mere stranger and foreigner, as much as if he was not there; so the saints of the most high God, whilst they are in this world, they are only strangers and sojourners in it; the city which they belong to, and of

which they are fellow-citizens, is above, quite out of sight to the men of this world ; so that none can see it, but only they who are of it ; and yet nevertheless, all have as much ground to believe there is such a city, a communion of saints in the world, as if they saw it with their eyes.

There are many cities upon earth which none of us ever saw, and yet we believe there are such, only upon the report of men that have been there, and told us of them ; how much more cause have we to believe there is such a city as the new Jerusalem, of which the saints are free, though we never saw it, seeing God himself hath told us of it, *who cannot lie*, as men may, and often do ? For having his word for it, by faith, as it is *the evidence of things not seen*, it is as evident to us as any city we see upon the earth, and far more evident ; forasmuch as not only our senses, but our whole souls are thereby affected with it, and possessed with a greater certainty than it is possible for our senses to produce ; insomuch, that all true believers live with a quick sense of it always upon their minds, and not only of the city itself, but of all things belonging to it, as they are described in God's holy word, and therefore look upon it as the most glorious city in the world, as most certainly it is.

Be sure the chief Magistrate or supreme Governor of it is the most glorious person in the world, the Almighty God our Saviour, *who having purchased it with his own blood*, Acts xx. 28. *is the head of this body*, Col. i. 18. *as he is of all things else for the sake of it*, Eph. i. 22. It is wholly his, so that he hath absolute dominion over it, and governs both the whole and every part of it, and all its affairs, according to his own divine will ; what kind of government he exerciseth in that part of it which is above, it is neither necessary nor possible for us to know till we come thither, seeing he hath not been pleased to reveal it to us ; but here below we find, that he hath constituted and appointed several officers under him ; *he hath made some apostles, and*

some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, Eph. iv. 11, 12. Where we see the great end wherefore he hath established these officers under him, *even that by their ministry, his body might be edified, and the saints perfected, so as to be meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,* Col. i. 12. But still they are only his ministers, his ambassadors, as they are called, 2 Cor. v. 20. It is from him they receive all their power and instructions what to do; and in the execution of their respective offices, it is he that co-operates with them to make them answer the end of their establishment, for which purpose he is always with them; *Lo, saith he, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,* Matt. xxviii. 20. From whence we may likewise observe, that he is always resident upon the place, he by his Holy Spirit dwells continually in this holy city, which is therefore said to be an *habitation of God through the Spirit,* Eph. ii. 22. Neither doth he dwell only in one, but in every part of it; *both the whole body, and every member, is the temple of the living God,* 2 Cor. vi. 16. 1 Cor. iii. 16. So that he is every where present, and ready to direct and govern both the state of the city in general, and the affairs of every particular person in it, to inspire them with holy resolutions, to put them upon doing their duty to him, and to one another, to assist them in the doing it, and so to keep them always within the compass of the laws which he hath set them; and whatsoever he doth, none have cause to complain, but all have cause to admire his infinite wisdom and goodness, and mercy and justice, in every thing he doth, as the saints in heaven do, saying, *Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints,* Rev. xv. 3. And as for the laws by which the King of saints governs his holy society, they being all of his own making, are all like himself, divine,

all holy, just, and good, the best that infinite wisdom could invent, and infinite goodness can impose upon them. He himself saith, *My yoke is easy, and my burden is light*, Matt. xi. 30. and his apostle, *that his commandments are not grievous*, 1 John v. 3. Howsoever they may seem to flesh and blood, they are made so agreeable to the renewed and spiritual nature of the saints, that so far as they are such, it is not a trouble, but a pleasure to them to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless; *they delight in the law of God after the inward man*, Rom. vii. 22. But so long as they are in the body, *they see another law in their members warring against the law of their mind, and bringing them into captivity to the law of sin which is in their members*, ver. 23. which is the greatest trouble they have in the world, making them sometimes cry out as the apostle did, *Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* ver. 24. But in this also, their most gracious Head and Governor affords them so much help and comfort, that they are able to add with the same apostle, *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord*, ver. 25. *for his grace is always sufficient for them, his strength is made perfect in their weakness; his power resteth continually upon them*, 2 Cor. xii. 8. *so that they can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth them*, Phil. iv. 13. All that is required of them in their several places, and according to their several capacities, in this their imperfect state, and though what they do comes not up exactly to what the strictness of their law requires, yet it is accepted of as well as if it did; for what is wanting in them, Christ himself makes up out of his own all-sufficient merits; *so that as an holy priesthood, they offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, though not in themselves, yet by Jesus Christ*, 1 Pet. ii. 5. who takes that particular care of all their concerns, that he useth all means to prevent their falling into sin, and to keep them stedfast to their duty; he affords them all the

means of grace, and assists them in the use thereof: if notwithstanding they offend against his laws, he chastiseth them one way or other, not for his own pleasure, but for their profit, that *they may partake of his holiness*, Heb. xii. 10. And for the same end he directs, animates, and encourageth them in doing well, still washing them from their sins with his own blood, and perfuming their good works with the incense of his own merits, so as to present this whole society or communion of saints to himself as a glorious church, *not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish*, Eph. iv. 29. and so fit to live with him in heaven.

And whilst he continues them upon earth, he employs them altogether in his own service, to promote his honour and glory, the great end for which he made the world, and redeemed mankind in general, and for which he called them particularly to be saints, Rom. i. 7. This is their trade and business, the design they all carry on together; so that how far soever they may live asunder, some in one country, and some in another, and how much soever they may differ in age, temper, language, gifts, parts, learning, estate, and other circumstances of this life; they are all of the same vocation or calling, they all serve the same Master, and all make it their chief study to glorify him in the world. Some do it one way, and some another, but they all strive to do it the best they can; for which purpose, as they are all led by the same Spirit, they all keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; they all agree in all the fundamental articles of the Christian religion; they give all diligence *to add to their faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity*, 2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7. They all love God with all their hearts, their neighbours as themselves, and one another as brethren; they all live soberly, righteously,

and godly in this present world, *and are all stedfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, as knowing their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*, 1 Cor. xv. 58. For by this means as they honour God, he will honour them ; as they promote his glory, so they *work out their own salvation, and make their calling and election sure.*

Thus all that are called into this holy city, and are accordingly admitted into it, employ themselves continually with one heart and mind in this their heavenly calling, making it not only their business, but their only recreation also, and delight ; not concerning themselves about any thing which happens in this world, any further than to improve it all they can, to their end of living in it ; *for even whilst they are upon earth, their conversation is in heaven*, Phil. iii. 20. Their *πολίτευμα*, their trade and business, their traffic and commerce, as they are citizens of the new Jerusalem, it is always in heaven, labouring with all their might to do the will of their heavenly Father here, as their fellow-citizens do it there ; *still pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ*, Phil. iii. 14. *till they all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*, Eph. iv 13. and so are fit company for the holy angels and *spirits of just men made perfect.*

But for the better carrying on and accomplishing the end of this their holy calling, as all civil corporations upon earth have their public meetings to consult about the affairs belonging to their body, so all that are of this heavenly society, wheresoever they live, they often meet together in the name of Christ their head, and according to his appointment in places dedicated to him, therefore called the *houses of God*, Eccles. v. 1, &c. where he himself always meets with them as their Lord and Governor, presiding over the whole assembly. This they are always sure of, in that he himself asserts it, saying,

Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them, Matt. xviii. 20. Here it is therefore that they present their common supplications before him for all things relating to their whole body, and to every member of it. Here they perform their homage to him as their Lord and Master, by worshipping and adoring of him. Here they recount the great works that he hath done for them, and praise his glorious name for all the favours which he continually bestows upon them. Here by one of his ministers he repeats something of what he hath revealed to mankind in his holy word, and so puts them in mind of what he would have them to believe and do for him ; and here they feast together upon that spiritual food which he hath prepared for them, of which they all partake alike. All the saints upon earth, wheresoever they duly approach to their Lord's table, they all eat the same spiritual meat, and all drink the same spiritual drink, for they all by faith eat and drink the blessed body and blood of Christ, and so keep up their communion both with him, and one another ; for, as the apostle saith, *the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ ? for we, being many, are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread,* 1 Cor. x. 16, 17. In that they all partake of one bread, they are therefore all one body, and, as such, have communion among themselves, and in that they all receive the communion of the body and blood of Christ, they have thereby also communion with him their head. This is that which perfecteth the communion of saints ; who therefore always hunger and thirst after this bread and water of life, and catch at all opportunities they can find of communicating in it, and never forsake the assembling of themselves together in their particular places of their abode upon earth, till they come at last to the general assembly of all the saints that ever were or shall be

in the world, which shall be continued for ever in heaven.

And verily it is no wonder that all who are fellow-citizens with the saints, are so careful to keep up their communion with them, considering the great immunities and privileges which are granted to this holy city; for all that are free of this society, enjoy the whole *liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free*, Gal. v. 1 *the glorious liberty of the children of God*, Rom. viii. 21. They are all free *from the bondage of corruption*, and from that also of the ceremonial law, so as not to be entangled any more with it, *ibid.* They are freed from the tyranny of satan, so as not to be any longer in subjection to him as others are, *nor taken captive by him at his will*, 2 Tim. ii. 26. *They are freed from the power of sin*, which reigns no longer in their mortal bodies, seeing they are *now under the grace of Christ*, Rom. vi. 12, 14. *They are freed from the punishments which were due unto them for their sins, by the blood of the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world*, John i. 29. *They are freed from the cares of this world, having him who governs it to care for them*, 1 Pet. v. 7. *They are freed from the torments of a guilty conscience, from the wrath of God, and from everlasting damnation*, which all other people are every moment subject to. Besides these immunities, they have many special privileges also conferred upon them, *which none enjoy but they who are fellow-citizens with the saints.* *They have the holy angels to minister to them, and to keep them in all their ways*, Heb. i. 14. Psal. xci. 11. *They all by one Spirit have free access upon all occasions unto the Father*, Eph. ii. 18. with a gracious promise, *that whatsoever they ask in the name of Christ, shall be granted to them*, John xiv. 14. *They have the one Mediator between God and men, always appearing in the presence of God, and making intercession for them, and for none but them*, John xvii. 9. *They by means*

of the said intercession, *have Almighty God reconciled to them, and the light of his countenance shining continually upon them. They have the Holy Spirit of God always abiding with them, to direct them what to do, to assist them in the doing of it, to bless and sanctify it when it is done, and to support and comfort them under all occurrences in this troublesome world.* They want nothing that can either do them or make them good, but *have all things working together for their good*, Rom. viii. 28. and at the last day they will be all set at the right hand of the Judge of the whole world, and will hear him saying to them, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*, Matt. xxv. 34. where *they will shine forth every one as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father, for evermore*, chap. xiii. 43. This honour have all his saints; these be some of the many inestimable privileges, which all who are fellow-citizens with the saints enjoy; but that which is the greatest of all is, that none of them can ever be violated or infringed; for this is not like the cities of this world, which are often turned up-side-down, and all the rights and privileges they so much boast of destroyed and brought to nothing. No, this is the city, which, as the apostle saith, *hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God*, Heb. xi. 10. And such an architect as he be sure would build it well. He hath built it *upon a rock*, the rock of ages, so strong and firm, *that all the powers of hell can never shake it*. I know both the city itself, and all the citizens of it, have many enemies in the world, all the devils in hell, and all their slaves and agents upon earth. But what can all the devils in hell do either by themselves or agents, against a place or persons that are defended by Omnipotence itself? *Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel*, Numb. xxiii. 23. The greatest danger may be from those who transform themselves into *angels of light*, and by God's permission do as wonderful works as if they were so;

but there is no fear of them neither; for what doth Christ himself say? *There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders. insomuch, that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect*, Matt. xxiv. 24. Others, it seems, they shall and do deceive; but the elect, the saints of God, those they can never deceive. That is impossible, for they are kept by the almighty power of God through faith unto salvation; and therefore may always sing with their fellow-citizens in the prophet, *We have a strong city, salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks*, Isaiah xxvi. 1.

These things I have transferred unto you in a figure, representing the fellowship or communion that is among God's faithful people all the world over, under the similitude of a city used by the prophets and apostles for that purpose, that ye may the better apprehend what we mean by the *communion of saints*, and how happy they are who are of that communion. And if there be any such here present, as I hope there are, give me leave to congratulate your exceeding great felicity, in that the most high God, of his special grace, hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: he hath selected you from the rest of the world, as he did the seed of Jacob, to be his peculiar people: he hath delivered you in a wonderful manner from more than Egyptian bondage, from the slavery of sin and satan, into the glorious liberty of his own children, and is now leading you through the wilderness into the land of Canaan, and to the new Jerusalem that is above. How should this rejoice your hearts and cheer your spirits amidst all the troubles you meet with here below? You are not of this world, and therefore need not be concerned about any thing that is in it, but only how to carry yourselves in all conditions, as becometh saints.

The city you are of *is set on a hill, and cannot be hid*; and therefore ye must take special care that *your conversation may be such as becometh the Gospel of Christ*, Phil. i. 24. *that ye may walk worthy of*

God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory, 1 Thess. ii. 12. and worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, Eph. iv. 1, 2, 3. In short, as ye would manifest yourselves to be saints indeed, ye must walk worthy of the Lord unto all well pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made you meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, Col. i. 10, 11, 12.

But why should not we all be in the number of these blessed souls, fellow-citizens with the saints? Blessed be God, we are all yet as capable of it, we are all called to it, we may all be so if we will. This holy city is open and free for all that will come into it, and submit to the orders and discipline that is there observed, and for us by consequence as well as for any other. Let us therefore now resolve by God's assistance to do so, seeing God hath knit together his elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of his Son, and hath invited us to come into the same society; let us stand out no longer, but use all the means which God hath ordained whereby to obtain his grace and Holy Spirit, to lead us into all truth, to mortify the deeds of the body, and to purify our hearts so, that we may perfect holiness in the fear of God; always looking up to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, and trusting on him to intercede for us, that we may be received into the communion of his saints, and made fellow-citizens with them; not doubting but he will help his servants whom he hath redeemed with his own most precious blood, and make us to be numbered with his saints in glory everlasting: which God grant we may all be, through the same our Lord and Saviour Christ; *to whom, &c.*

SERMON XLIX.

THE CHRISTIAN PRIZE.

PHIL. iii. 14.

I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

THESE words at first sight may seem to be something obscure ; but we shall easily see into the meaning of them, if we first cast our eye awhile upon what goes before. The apostle is here discoursing of the great advantages he had by being a Christian, above what he could ever have expected in the Jewish religion, notwithstanding that he had as much to trust to in it as any other, or rather more. He was *circumcised the eighth day*, as the law required, *of the stock of Israel, of the famous tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews* ; his ancestors, both of his father's and mother's side, having been all along not proselytes, but of the Hebrew race, *and as touching the law he was a Pharisee*, ver. 4, 5. which was the strictest sect of all their religion, and yet he had lived in it *from the beginning*, Acts xxvi. 5. and by that means, was not only a professor, but a great zealot for the law, so as for the sake of that to persecute the church of Christ ; *and as touching the righteousness which is of the law, he was blameless*, ver. 6. No man could accuse him of having ever broken any part of the Mosaic law, either moral or ceremonial ; for he, like Zacharias and Elizabeth, had *walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord*

blameless, Luke i. 6. And all this he had done, not like other Pharisees, hypocritically, to be seen of men, but heartily, sincerely, out of pure conscience; for he himself, when inspired with the Holy Ghost, said, *I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day*, Acts xxiii. 1.

These certainly were very great things which St. Paul had attained to in the Jewish religion, and such as one would think were sufficient to justify him before God; and so questionless he himself thought as long as the veil was upon his face; but when that was done away in Christ, he presently saw the contrary, and therefore saith, *but what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ*, ver. 7 and, as if that had not been enough, he adds, *yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith*, ver. 8, 9. where he plainly speaks of a two-fold righteousness, the one he calls his *own*, the other, that *which is through the faith of Christ*; the one he saith was *ἐκ νόμου of the law*, the other *ἐκ Θεοῦ of God by faith*: the first which he calls his *own righteousness*, which is *of the law*, must needs be the same he before spoke of, where he said, *that as touching the righteousness which is of the law, he was blameless*, ver. 6. which cannot without manifest absurdity be understood only of the ceremonial law, as if he thought that the observance of that, without obedience to the moral law, was any righteousness at all, much less such as he there saith, that he *might have had confidence in*, as well or better than any other man, ver. 4. And besides, he himself puts it beyond all doubt, that he had all along made conscience of keeping the whole law of God, moral as well as ceremonial, in that he saith, in the place before quoted, *I have lived in all good*

conscience before God until this day. This therefore was his righteousness which was *of the law*, and which he might very well *have confidence in*, as much as any man whatsoever ; and so questionless he had till his eyes were opened ; but then he looked upon it as nothing, as to his justification before God ; *for*, saith he, *I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified*, 1 Cor. iv. 4. Yea, he *counted* this and *all things* else *but loss and dung*, in comparison of that other righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, *the righteousness which is of God by faith* ; which expressions can mean no less than that this other righteousness is not of ourselves by any thing that we ourselves can do, but wholly of God ; and that it is made or reckoned ours only *through the faith of Christ* ; and therefore the apostle desiring to have this righteousness whereby to be accounted righteous before God, he for that purpose desires to be *found in Christ*, in whom alone it is to be had ; that being made by faith a member of Christ, he might be interested in his merits, and have a share in his righteousness, so as by that to be justified or accounted righteous before God ; and accordingly our church hath rightly declared, *that we are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings*, Acts ii.

But that we may the better understand the excellency of this righteousness, and so the reason wherefore he desired so earnestly to be found in Christ, he adds, *that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings*, ver. 10. He desired it first, that he might *know* and acknowledge Christ in general, as he is revealed in the Gospel, and more particularly that he might know and feel *the power of his resurrection*, that power which he by virtue of his resurrection conferred upon his church, by sending his Holy Spirit to abide with it for ever, to quicken the sound members of it, to raise them up to newness of life, and

to enable them to fulfil all righteousness, *so as that they can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth them*, Phil. iv. 13. By which means the righteousness, which they thus perform by the power of Christ's resurrection, far exceeds all other, as being performed by the grace and Spirit of Christ, of God himself; but then he desired to be found in Christ, that he might know also by his own experience *the fellowship* or communion *of his sufferings*, that being in Christ he might have a share in his sufferings, which are communicated to all his members, so that they partake of all the merits of Christ's death and passion, and have such an interest in them, that the defects of their obedience are thereby made up, and they are accepted and accounted as righteous before God; and this is that which the apostle therefore calls *the righteousness which is of God*, because it is performed only by the grace of his Spirit, and accepted of only through the merits of that death which he suffered for us; and seeing it is only by faith, or believing in Christ, that we can partake either of his Spirit to enable us to perform it, or of his merit to make it acceptable to God, therefore it is here called, *that which is through the faith of Christ, and the righteousness which is of God by faith*.

After this the apostle adds, *being conformable to his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead*, v 10, 11. I know these sentences are usually divided, but I put them together, because the original text seems to require it, and so doth the sense of the place; for the apostle, proceeding upon his former doctrine, still goes on to shew, why he desired so much to be found in Christ, even that having by his Spirit mortified the deeds of the flesh, and so *being made conformable to his death*, he might, if *by any means* he could, *attain unto the resurrection of the dead*, that is, to such a state of perfection which the saints shall be advanced to, when risen from the dead; as the apostle himself explains that phrase in the fol-

lowing words, saying, *Not as though I had already attained either, or were already perfect.* Some perhaps might have thought that he had attained to perfection already, but that he denies; *but*, saith he, *I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended*, or laid hold on, *of Christ Jesus*, even that I might be wholly and perfectly his, v. 12.

I have insisted the longer upon this remarkable place of Scripture, because there are several passages in it, which to me seem to be generally mistaken; and I have endeavoured to give you the true sense of the whole, as clearly as I could, without troubling you with any criticisms about it; and I have done it now, the better to clear the way to my text, which could not so well be understood without it; but now we may easily apprehend the whole drift and design of it: for the apostle having thus discoursed of the great privileges and advantages which they have who are in Christ, above other people, particularly in that they have another righteousness to trust to besides their own, and another power and Spirit to guide, assist, and govern them in their actions, the same whereby Christ was raised from the dead, and by which they also may therefore be raised to the highest degree of perfection which their nature is capable of, if they do but apprehend or lay hold upon it aright: he now proceeds to shew us what care he himself took to improve these mighty advantages to his own eternal good. *Brethren*, saith he, *I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* As if he had said in general; “Brethren, I would not have you think that I have as yet made that full use of the grace which is offered me in the Gospel of Christ, so as to attain to a state of absolute perfection by it, for I myself reckon that I have not; but this one thing I can say of my-

“ self, that not regarding what I have already done in
“ it, but I have still to do, I make it my constant busi-
“ ness to get as near unto it as I can, that so I may be
“ sure at last to obtain that crown of glory to which
“ God in so high and heavenly a manner hath called
“ me in Christ Jesus.”

This is the plain meaning of the words. But the apostle writing to the Philippians, who living in Macedonia, where men commonly run races for a certain prize, which he who came first to the goal, or mark, received, were very well acquainted with the terms used upon those occasions ; he therefore, to make his meaning the clearer to them, expresseth it in that language. Heaven, or eternal glory and happiness, he calls a *prize* : this prize God, as the Judge sitting on high, calls all to, that have a mind to run for it : but it is given them, not as won by themselves, but in Christ Jesus ; for it is the *prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*. That degree of evangelical perfection, to which this prize is promised, the apostle calls *the mark*, which whosoever gets to, shall certainly have the said prize : therefore the apostle *pressed towards* that *mark*, had it still in his eye, and did all he could to come to it ; and for that purpose as they who ran in a race did not use to look behind, but before them ; not how far they had gone, but how far they had still to go : so he, *forgetting those things which were behind*, taking no notice at all that he had hitherto done, no more than as if he had done nothing as yet, and still looking before him, and stretching himself with all his might to reach to what he had yet to do, he *pressed* all he could *to the mark*, *for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*.

For what the apostle did in this case, though he did it for himself, he wrote it for our imitation ; he himself in effect tells us so, by saying presently after, *Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample*, ver. 17. God

grant that we may all do so. I am sure it is as much for our interest as it is our duty to do it; which therefore that we may be persuaded to do, and also directed in the right way of doing it, I shall, by God's assistance, first set before you the *prize*, and then shew you the *mark*, and how you must *press* towards it, for the obtaining of the said prize.

All that is necessary to be known concerning the prize, may be reduced to these four heads: I. The nature of it, what it is. II. In what sense it is called *the prize of the high calling of God*. III. Wherefore, in *Jesus Christ*. IV. That we both may and ought to aim at getting this prize, as the apostle here saith he did.

A prize in general was always something of profit or honour propounded to those who contended in any game, as an encouragement to all to do what they could, and a reward to him that did best; as particularly in races, which the apostle here alludes to, to him who came first to the goal or mark. In the Grecian races, it was usually a crown or garland of certain green leaves, which was reckoned a great ensign of honour: and in our Christian race, it is a crown too, but of a much higher nature, yea, the highest that can be; for, as the apostle saith, *they do it to gain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible*, 1 Cor. ix. 25. A crown not of fading leaves, which was only a mark of honour, and that too only in the fancy of silly mortals, but *a crown of real honour, of glory that fadeth not away*, 1 Pet. v. 4. *a crown of righteousness*, 2 Tim. iv. 8. *a crown of life*, James i. 12. Rev. ii. 10. *of eternal life*, Matt. xxv. 46. This is the crown that is given to all that overcome in the *race* which Christ hath *set before* them; and it is given to them, whatsoever country they are of, not as to strangers and foreigners, but as to the sons and heirs, and therefore is called an *inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them*, 1 Pet. i. 4. In

heaven, there it is that this crown is kept, and this inheritance settled upon them; and how large an inheritance, how glorious a crown this is, the righteous Judge himself discovered to his beloved disciple, saying, *He that overcometh, shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son*, Rev. xxi. 7 From whence we may see the greatness and excellency, the superexcellency of this prize, which doth not consist of any one or more particular things, but of *all things* that are; for he that overcometh in our Christian race, and so obtaineth this prize, *shall inherit all things*, all things that he can desire, all things that can any way contribute to his glory and happiness, as all things which God hath made shall some way or other do to every one that overcometh: for it is not said, *They who overcome shall inherit all things*, as if the universe was to be parcelled out among many, some having one thing, and some another: but how many soever they be that shall overcome, the promise is made to every one singly, and by himself, *He that overcometh shall inherit all things*, as much as if none had any thing but himself. This must needs be acknowledged to be very much. It is indeed more than we can well comprehend, how one man should possess all things that God hath made. And yet, as if that was not enough, he shall have infinitely more too, even him that made them all; for so runs the promise, *and I will be his God, and he shall be my son*; or, according to the literal construction of the words, and I will be God *to him*, and he shall be a son *to me*, which implies the nearest relation to, and the greatest interest in, the Creator himself that it is possible for a creature to have. It was a great reward which king Saul proffered to him that should overcome the Philistine, when he promised to give him his daughter to wife, and so make him his son-in-law, 1 Sam. xvii. 25. But in this spiritual warfare, the King of all kings hath passed his word, that he who overcomes shall be his son, and if a son, then an

heir, *an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ*, Rom. viii. 17 Neither will God be only his father, but *his God*, or *God to him*; by virtue of which promise, he that overcomes shall enjoy all that a creature is capable of in God himself, the chiefest good, the centre of all perfections whatsoever; which is so great an happiness, that none can conceive it, but only they who have it. We may treat or discourse of it, as we often do, when in the mean while we know but little of it, not being able to see any further into it, than as we perceive now and then some glimmerings of it within ourselves. Only this we know, that it is the greatest happiness that a creature is capable of, and that he who once hath it, shall have it for ever. This is that glorious, that incorruptible, that everlasting crown, which is proposed in the Gospel as the prize to all that overcome in the race which is there set before them.

The apostle here calls it, *the prize of the high calling*, as being the highest prize we can be called to; and we are called to it from the highest place, that is, from heaven itself, and therefore it is called, *the heavenly calling*, Heb. iii. 1. Neither are we called to it by an angel, or archangel, or by any other of the glorious creatures that are in heaven, but by the almighty Creator, by God himself. It is *the prize of the high calling of God*, it is he alone can give it, and therefore he alone can call us to it; but, blessed be his great name, he hath been most graciously pleased to do it all along, from the beginning of the world to this day, for many ages. He called mankind to this prize by his prophets, and afterwards by his Son, who came into the world on purpose to call sinners to repentance, as the way to their obtaining of it, Matt. ix. 13. *Come to me*, saith he, *all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls*, Matt. xi. 28, 29. Afterwards he continued to do it by his apostles, and still by his min-

isters, appointed and ordained by him for that very purpose. *For we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God,* 2 Cor. v. 20.

Where ye may further observe, that as *God doth*, as it were, *beseech you by us*, so *we pray you in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God*, that so ye may obtain this prize: it is in him that God calls you to it, and therefore it is here said to be *the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*. It was Christ that purchased this crown, and gave the greatest price for it that ever was or can be given for any thing in the world, for he gave no less than the blood of God. Hence he is said to be the *author of eternal salvation*, Heb. v. 9. *and eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord*, Rom. vi. 23. It is the gift of God in respect of us, who can do nothing to deserve it, but he gives it only *through Jesus Christ*, as he is *our Lord*, who was pleased to purchase it for us with his own most precious blood; and seeing it is only by him that we can obtain this prize, it is in him only that God calls us to it; but in him he calls us all, and hath sent me in a particular manner at this time to call upon all here present to run for this glorious prize, and to assure you, that if ye run according to the rules which he hath set you, ye shall most certainly have it.

Hearken to what he himself saith; *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die? Ezek. xxxiii. 11 Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken then diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear,*

and your soul shall live : and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David, Isa. lv. 1, 2, 3. *Strive to enter in at the strait gate,* Luke xiii. 24. *Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you,* John vi. 27. *Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize ? So run, that ye may obtain,* 1 Cor ix. 24.

According to which, and such like general invitations made you in the holy Scriptures, which every one should apply unto himself, I, in the name of God, and in Christ's stead, pray and beseech you all, to lay aside the thoughts of all things else, as much as possibly ye can, and to apply your minds wholly to the getting of that prize which Christ hath procured, and now offers to you in his holy Gospel : let your eye be always fixed upon it, and your hand stretched out to catch at it. Whatsoever worldly business ye may have upon your hands, let it not come near your heart, but let that be always running after the crown that is set before you. Remember it is a crown that lies at stake, and such a crown, that all the crowns and sceptres upon earth are not worthy to be compared, nor so much as named the same day with it ; and notwithstanding the incomparable worth and value of it, many of our fellow-mortals have already obtained it, and many at this time are striving for it ; why therefore should not you do so as well as others ? It is as free for you as for any other whatsoever : it was purchased for you all, and you are all now called to it ; and if any of you miss of it, it is your own fault, for ye may all have it if ye will. There is not any one person in this congregation, but may be advanced to the kingdom of heaven, and there shine as the sun in the firmament for ever, if ye will but set yourselves in good earnest upon looking after it, and walk in the narrow way that leads to it : wherefore as ye tender your own everlasting good and welfare, be advised to do so ; follow the apostle's

example, *press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*, and never leave till ye have got possession of it.

But some perhaps may question whether it be lawful thus to aim at this crown of glory for ourselves in any thing, much more in all things that we do, seeing we are expressly commanded, *Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, to do all to the glory of God*, 1 Cor. x. 31 whereas by this means we may seem to look at our own glory, and not at his. But there is no ground for any such scruple; for such is the love of God to mankind, that he hath so interwoven his glory and ours together, that it is impossible to seek the one without the other. No man can do any thing for God's glory but what will tend also to his own; and no man can do any thing for his own glory, but what will tend also unto God's. He himself saith, *If we honour him, he will honour us*, 1 Sam. ii. 30. and he therefore honours us, that we may honour him; this being the great end of all the glory which he confers upon us, even that we may glorify him eternally for it; and therefore he that aims at this glorious crown, and strives all he can to get it, although he may seem to have respect more immediately to himself, yet it tends ultimately to the glory of God; and, by consequence, it is not only lawful, but our duty to do it. God himself hath made it so: for he hath commanded us, *to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven*, Matt. vi. 20. *To seek his kingdom and righteousness in the first place*, ver. 33. *To strive to enter in at the strait gate*, Luke xiii. 24. There are many such places in the holy Scriptures, some whereof were mentioned before, wherein God is pleased not only to permit, but to require us to look to the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls; and to encourage us thereunto, he hath made us many gracious promises, that our labour shall not be in vain; all which would be in vain and to no purpose, if after all we might not have an eye to what

he hath so promised; but to put it beyond all dispute, Christ himself who did no sin, yet in all his sufferings he looked at the glory which should be conferred upon him for them, as one great motive of his undergoing them; for it is written of him, that he, for the *joy which was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God*, Heb. xii. 2. The same may be said of God's saints and servants in all ages. *They all, like Moses, have respect to the recompence of the reward*, Heb. xi. 26. But we need go no further than my text for a plain example of it; for here the great apostle, by the special direction of God's Holy Spirit, saith expressly, *I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ*. He had, it seems, this prize always in his eye, and that made him press so earnestly towards the mark for the obtaining of it.

But then the main question is, what the apostle here means by pressing towards the mark; for the understanding whereof, it will be necessary to consider, first, what he means by *the mark*, and then, what by *pressing towards it*. By the mark, as I observed before, from the context, he understandeth such a degree of evangelical perfection to which the prize is promised. The same appears also from the text itself: for the apostle having before acknowledged that he was not yet perfect, he here saith, that he *pressed towards the mark for the prize*. Not doubting but if he was at the mark, he would certainly have the prize here spoken of; and therefore by the mark, he can mean nothing else but such a state of perfection in this life, to which the said prize is certainly promised in the Gospel. But for our better understanding of this, it will be necessary to lay down these few propositions.

First, no man ever yet did or can attain to a state of absolute perfection in this life. For no man can be said to be absolutely perfect, but he whose understanding is so perfect, that he knows all things that he is bound to

know ; whose judgment is so perfect, that he judgeth of all things as he is bound to judge ; whose memory is so perfect, that he remembers all things that he is bound to remember ; whose will and affections or passions are all so perfect, that they are placed upon their right objects in a right and perfect manner ; whose life and conversation is all so perfect, that he never thinks or speaks or acts any thing but what he ought, and doth every thing which he is bound to do, just as he is bound to do, without any the least sin, error, mistake, inadvertency, or deviation from God's revealed will. This would be a perfect man. But where shall we find or did ever hear of such a man, except him who is God as well as man ? Not surely upon earth ; for *there is not a just man upon earth that doth good, and sinneth not*, Eccles. vii. 20. Who can say, *I have made my heart clean, I am pure from sin* ? Prov. xx. 9. *There is no man that sinneth not*, 1 Kings viii. 46. *And if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*, 1 John i. 8. There are many such places in the holy Scriptures, wherein God himself, who knows all men's hearts and lives, positively asserts that they are all corrupt and sinful. The same hath been acknowledged by his saints and servants in all ages. The best men that ever lived have been conscious to themselves of many imperfections in their lives, particularly St. Paul, who had certainly attained to as divine a temper of mind as ever man did, yet he here owns that he was not yet perfect ; and if he had been so, he needed not have pressed towards the *mark*, for he would have been at it already.

In the next place, though none ever did or can attain to absolute perfection while they are in the body, yet all should aim at it, and strive to come as near it as they can : for the law requires perfect obedience ; and *cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them*, Gal. iii. 10. And therefore although we have brought ourselves into such a condition, that we cannot now perform such per-

fect and exact obedience to the whole moral law as we are bound, yet we are still bound both in duty and interest to do it: and though we cannot do it so well as we ought, we ought to do it as well as we can. How far soever we have gone in the narrow path that leads to life, we must still go on further and further. How much soever we have hitherto learned and endeavoured to walk so as to please God, we must *abound more and more*, 1 Thess. iv. 1. Whatsoever grace we have already attained to, we must not be content with that, but be always labouring after more; we *must give all diligence to add to our faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity*, 2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7. And as we should be always thus adding one grace to another, so likewise one degree of grace unto another, so as to grow in *grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, 2 Pet. iii. 18. This every man is bound to do, and by that means to get every day nearer and nearer to perfection, until he hath got as near it as he can in this life, all things considered.

I say, *all things considered*, because all men's circumstances are not alike. Some have more abilities and greater opportunities than others, and so may or can do more than others if they will, and so come nearer to a state of perfection; and unless they do so, they come short of the others, who have less power, but yet improve it better, by doing all they can with it.

To explain this, we may observe, that the grace of Christ is sufficient for all: *all may receive of him, and grace for grace*, John i. 16. even whatsoever grace they have occasion for, whereby to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. *I can do all things*, saith St. Paul, *through Christ that strengtheneth me* Phil iv. 13. *But without him we can do nothing*, John xv. 5. And therefore he that aims at perfection, and would do all things which he

ought towards it, must attempt it only in the name of Christ, firmly believing and trusting in him for his grace and assistance, by which any man may do whatsoever is required of him in his place and station. But some have clearer revelations of Christ than others, greater opportunities of exercising their faith in him, and more effectual means for their receiving of grace from him; and yet the other may come as near to a state of perfection as they, by improving the knowledge, opportunities, and means of grace which they enjoy to the utmost of their power. One also may live in a cloister, or so retired, that he hath no temptations, nothing to disturb or molest him in his race. Another lives in the world, where he meets with many things which are apt to divert and turn him out of the way. This latter, by care and diligence, may arrive at as high, and perhaps an higher degree of perfection than the former, though not perhaps considered in itself, yet with respect to each man's circumstances. For if we suppose him to be as good as the other in himself, he is really better in comparison of him, and so will be in God's esteem, in that he must needs have taken more pains, and have exerted the utmost of his power more carefully for it, than the other had. As the poor widow in the Gospel, which threw but two mites into the treasury, is esteemed by our Saviour to have cast in more than they which had cast in a great deal, because *they had cast in of their abundance, she of her penury had cast in all she had*, Mark xii. 43, 44. So he who doth all he can to be perfect as his heavenly Father is perfect, comes nearer to it than they who perhaps may do much more, but not so much as they can.

Lastly, they whose hearts are thus set to do all they can by the grace of Christ, are doubtless in a state of evangelical perfection, or such a state, which God, for Christ's sake, is pleased to accept of instead of that perfection which the law requires, and to which he hath therefore promised the crown of glory in his holy Gos-

pel ; and so they are got to the mark here spoken of, having no cause to fear but they shall obtain *the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ*. For though they cannot reach the mark which the law hath set them, yet they are got so near it, that Christ who sits there as judge can lay hold of them, and put the crown upon their heads.

I do not see how this can be better explained, than by the similitude of a race, which the apostle himself here useth for that purpose : as suppose a great prince, the greatest in the world, having many subjects, and a great kindness for them all, he issueth forth his royal proclamation, that all of them, who in such a time will run to such a goal or mark which he hath set up, shall have as rich a crown as can be made. His subjects hearing of it, they all, or at least many of them, run for this crown ; but none of them can reach the mark in that time ; upon which, their prince having one only-begotten son, he intercedes with his father, that they may notwithstanding have the crown, if they will but run as fast as they can, and come so near to the mark, that he can reach them. This the father, upon his son's mediation, consents to, and appoints him to sit there as judge, to see how every one ran, and to order the whole affair as he sees good. The son therefore, by his messengers, acquaints all his subjects of these glad tidings. But by this time, most of them have laid aside all thoughts of the crown, and therefore slight the message. Only some having still a mind to the crown, resolve to run for it, and accordingly set out ; but of these, some meeting with several rubs in the way, are soon disheartened and give over. Others run out of the way, or else so lazily, that their time is spent before they are got half-way. But some few having dieted themselves, hold on their right course, and use the utmost of their strength to get as near as it is possible to the mark for this glorious prize ; which the judge per-

ceiving, he animates and encourages them all he can, putting such life and spirit into them, that before their time is quite spent, they come up to the terms or limits that he hath set them ; by which means, although some may not get so near the old mark as others, yet they all get to that, which he, by the new agreement with his father, procured for them, and so are all within his reach ; and therefore he puts forth his hand, lays hold of them, and takes them up unto himself, *to sit with him on his throne*, and gives them every one the prize they run for, Apoc. iii. 21 Of this sort was St. Paul ; *he pressed towards this mark*, and so got the prize ; we may be sure of it, for he himself saith so, before he actually had it ; as appears from his saying by the infallible direction of the Holy Ghost, *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith ; henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day ; and not to me only, but to all them also that love his appearing*, 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

And why should not you and I get this crown as well as St. Paul, or any other ? blessed be God, we are all as yet both capable of it, and invited to it, yea, we are commanded by the great Prince I speak of, the Sovereign of the world, *to run so as to obtain it*, 1 Cor. ix. 24. And therefore, if any of us miss of it, it is our own fault, in that we will not run as we are commanded for it : for if we do that, we shall as certainly have it, as if it was already upon our heads. Let us therefore be now so wise for ourselves as to do so in good earnest, and for that purpose take the same course as St. Paul did for it. What that was, we need not go far from this place to know ; for he himself here tells us all he did, saying, *This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press towards the mark*.

Wherefore, if we would run our Christian race so as

to get the prize, as St. Paul did, we must follow him in these several steps which he made towards it ; we must first *forget those things which are behind*. They who run in a race, do not use to look behind, but before them ; nor how many they have over-run, but how many have over-run them ; nor yet how far they have gone, but how far they have still to go. So here ; how great a progress soever we have made in the way to bliss, we must not regard that, but look before us, and still go on. We must not mind how much better we may be than others, but how much better others are than we ; nor matter how much good we have done, but how much we have still to do. We must not only put no trust or confidence in the duties which we have hitherto performed, or in the virtues which we have already attained, but, as the apostle here speaks, we must forget them all, taking no more notice of them, than as if we had never done or gotten any thing at all as yet. The want of observing this, hath been the ruin of many people, who having lived a civil and sober life, and done, perhaps, many things which they think were very good, they reckon themselves secure, and trouble their heads no further about their future state, as if they had done enough already, and had no more to do but to go to heaven, and there enjoy the fruit of all their labours ; but this is a great and dangerous mistake ; for he that thinks he is gone far enough already in the race that Christ hath set him, hath just cause to suspect, that he hath not yet made any one true step in it, but hath it all still to run ; and how far soever a man is got, unless he continue his course to the end, he can never have the prize ; for that is promised only to him that *overcometh and keepeth the works of God unto the end*, Apoc. ii. 26. And therefore St. Paul *forgetting those things which were behind*, he still *reached forth to those things which were before* ; or, as the word may be rendered, he stretched himself, as they do in a race, that he might run as fast,

and as far as possibly he could, in the way that was still before him ; so must we ; we must exert the utmost of our strength to grow better and better, and to do more and more good every day than other, as long as we live ; we must never suffer ourselves to grow cold or lukewarm in religion, as they are who serve God with that carelessness and indifferency, as if it was no great matter whether they served him or no. But we must be always *fervent in spirit, in serving the Lord*, Rom. xii. 11. And whatsoever spiritual heat and zeal we have already attained to, we must be still labouring after more, with all our might and strength, as long as God is pleased to give us time to do it. Always not only doing, but *abounding in the work of the Lord, as knowing that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*, 1 Cor xv. 58. For this is the way to obtain the prize of *the high calling of God in him our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*.

But for that purpose, St. Paul, *thus forgetting those things which were behind, and reaching forth to those things which were before, he pressed towards the mark* ; that is, he earnestly desired, he sincerely aimed at, he endeavoured all he could to come at perfection itself, at least at that which by virtue of the new covenant may be accepted of as such ; so must every one that would have the prize. He must press directly towards the mark for it. Though he cannot be so perfect as he would, he must strive to be as perfect as he can be in this life ; he must not rest satisfied with any low degree of faith, humility, justice, charity, or any other virtue, but his heart must be always longing after the high pitch that his mortal nature is capable of. He must always have it in his eye, looking at it as the great end of all his life. He must mind other things only by the by ; this must be the work and business he is constantly employed about. He must read and hear God's holy word, to learn how he may accomplish it. He must

pray most heartily for it, and not only in private, but in public, as often as he can get an opportunity. He must be temperate in all things, and keep his body by fasting and abstinence so clean and pure, that it may be a fit temple for the Holy Ghost to dwell in. He must keep his mind above this world, and have his conversation in heaven, *from whence cometh every good and perfect gift*. He must neglect no opportunities he can get of receiving the sacrament of the Lord's supper, to strengthen and refresh his soul with the body and blood of Christ his Saviour. He must often examine himself to know the true state of his soul, what sin wants subduing, what grace wants strengthening in him, how far he hath already gone, and how far he hath still to go, before he comes at perfection. He must be continually exercising his faith, in his ever-blessed Redeemer, and so deriving power and virtue from him, that he may be able to say with our apostle, *I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me*, Phil. iv. 13. He must never shrink at any trial that is laid upon him, but look upon it as sent from God to make him better, and improve it all he can to that end and purpose. In short, he must press through all the difficulties that he meets with in the way, and *run with patience the race that is set before him*, that he may at last come to *the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ*.

Blessed are they who thus press towards the mark. They shall certainly have the prize, the richest prize that is in the whole world. They shall live under the protection of Almighty God, and have the light of his countenance shining continually upon them. They shall have *all things work together for their good*, and combine with one accord to make them happy all the while they live. They shall no sooner die, but the angel shall immediately carry them into Abraham's bosom, where they shall be never troubled any more with pain or sickness,

with crosses and disappointments, with cares and perplexity of mind, nor with the fear of any evil that can befall them. They shall be made equal to the holy angels themselves, in the purity and perfection both of their state and nature. They shall live with their ever-blessed Redeemer, and behold the glory which the Father hath given him. Their bodies shall be fashioned like to his glorious body, and shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. They shall be advanced to the highest honours, and enjoy all the delights and pleasures they are capable of; for they shall enjoy God himself, and so be as happy as it is possible for creatures to be, and that too for ever and ever.

This is the prize which the Son of God hath purchased for us with his own most precious blood, and now offers it to all that will press towards the mark for it; and to us as well as to any other. Let us therefore now resolve to run for it, and never rest till we have obtained it. Let silly mortals, if they please, spend their time in following after clouds and shadows; we have a prize before us that is worth more, infinitely more, than all this world, nothing less than the crown of eternal life and glory. Let us be so wise as to follow after that, and never leave till we have got hold of it. And for that purpose let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, striving which should be the foremost in it, which should do the most good in the world, according to our several estates and abilities; which should love, and fear, and serve, and worship, and obey God best; which should be the most pious and devout, the most sober and temperate, the most humble and meek, the most just, and kind, and merciful, and charitable towards all men. In short, let us all strive which should come the nearest to perfection, and so to *the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ*, Heb. xiii. 20, 21.

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us all perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ: to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen.



S E R M O N L.

THE NEW CREATION.

EPH. ii. 10.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

THE apostle in this chapter gives us a plain description of the state of nature, and the state of grace ; what sort of people we are as we proceed from the first Adam, and what we are made when we are ingrafted into the second : he first puts the Ephesians in mind how they had been dead in trespasses and sins, and that not only they, but we also, we the disciples of Christ, *we are all by nature the children of wrath, even as others*, v. 3. the children of wrath, because the children of disobedience, walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, and so directly contrary to the laws of God : who is therefore justly displeased with us, and hath passed the sentence of death, even of eternal death, upon all, and will most certainly execute it upon every one that goes out of this world no better than he came into it.

But then, on the other side, the apostle saith, *that when we were thus dead in sins, God hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together*, ver. 5, 6. He hath raised us up a new and spiritual life, that we may not only escape the death, to

which we were before condemned, but *sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*, and so enjoy everlasting life and happiness.

But this the apostle ascribes wholly to the grace of God. *For*, saith he, *by grace ye are saved through faith*, ver. 8. By grace on God's part, and through faith on ours, through faith in Christ, as the way whereby we come to be interested in his merits and mediation. And *that too is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works*, not of any thing which we ourselves can do, either to effect or to deserve it, *lest any man should boast ; but that God may have all the glory*, ver. 8, 9.

Now for the future illustration and proof of this great doctrine here delivered by the apostle, he adds these remarkable words, *For we are his workmanship, created in Jesus Christ unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them*. In which few words rightly understood, there are many things much to be observed by all that concern themselves in good earnest about their future state. And therefore I shall endeavour to explain them in the same order wherein they lie.

The apostle therefore, to shew that the great change that is made in us, when we are brought out of the state of nature into that of grace, is wrought in us wholly and solely by God himself ; he first observes in general, that *we are his workmanship*, not only as men, but as Christians ; not only as creatures, but as new creatures ; we are made such also by him, by whom we were at first made ; whatsoever means or instruments may be used in bringing it about, he is the efficient cause, he is the principal agent. *Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but it is God that giveth the increase*, 1 Cor. iii. 6. So that the whole new man also, with every part of it, is his workmanship.

It is his workmanship as much as the creation of the world was ; for, as the apostle here adds, *we are*

created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Here it seems a new creation or production of something out of nothing, though not of matter and substance, yet of qualities and endowments: piety and virtue being made to spring up where there was no such thing before, nothing like it, but rather the quite contrary; and therefore David prayed, that God would *create in him a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within him*, Psal. li. 10. He had an heart before, but it could not be a clean heart, unless it was created again. He had a spirit before, but that spirit must be renewed before it could be a right spirit, right in the sight of God, and set to obey his commandments.

But to distinguish this from the first creation, the apostle here saith, that *we are created in Christ Jesus*; and elsewhere, that *in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, or uncircumcision, but a new creation*, as the words there signify, Gal. vi. 15. *And if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature*, 2 Cor. v. 17. It is still in Christ that this creation is effected, or the new creature made. This is the great mystery of godliness that is revealed in the Gospel; out of which I shall therefore endeavour to set it in such a light, that we may all see what to believe concerning it, and what to do, that we may be eternally the better for it.

For which purpose we may first observe, that this Jesus Christ being both God and man in one person; as God, he was neither made nor created; but as man, he was *made of a woman*, Gal. iv. 4. and created immediately by God himself, according to that of the prophet, *The Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, a woman shall compass a man*, Jer. xxxi. 22. *The man that is my fellow*, saith the Lord of hosts, Zech. xiii. 7. *One, who, being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God*, Phil. ii. 6. *And yet nevertheless took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men*, ver. 7. He was made so by the immediate act of God himself, as the first

man was ; for as the Lord God formed Adam of the dust of the ground, Gen. ii. 7 so he formed Christ of the flesh or substance of the Virgin ; to whom the angel said, *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee ; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God*, Luke i. 35. Where we see, that Jesus Christ, who was to be born, is not called only an holy God, or holy man, but that *holy thing*, a thing made up of God and man together ; such a thing as never was before, any otherwise than in the decree and promise of God, but now it began actually to exist by the power of the Highest. It was by that, that the manhood was both formed and united to the divine person. And so in both respects, that holy thing, Christ Jesus, was the workmanship of God, created as the first man was by his almighty power.

And as the first man was not only a single human person, but one in whom all mankind was then contained, and therefore had no proper name given him, but was called Adam, that is, man, man in general : so Christ took not on him the nature of one or more particular human persons, but the whole human nature, the nature of man in general. And therefore although there were millions of human persons between the first man and him, yet *the man Christ Jesus is called the second man*, 1 Cor. xv. 47. the second that was man in general as the first was ; and for the same reason he is called also the last Adam, ver. 45. because the whole nature of man was in him, as well as it was in the first Adam. And that too with this mighty advantage, that it was in the first only as in a finite human person, but in the last, in a person that is infinite and divine, so as to make but one person with him ; for that which was formed of the substance of the blessed Virgin, never subsisting of itself, but being from its first conception united to the Godhead, could not make a person of itself distinct from the divine ; but as *the reasonable soul*

and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ ; one, not by conversion of the Godhead into the flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God.

Now the manhood in general, or whole human nature, being thus in God our Saviour, whatsoever he did or suffered as man, was done and suffered by the whole nature of man ; and it being done and suffered in an infinite person, it could not but be of infinite worth and merit for those who are of that nature. Hence it is, that as our whole nature was corrupted in the first man, it is cleansed and sanctified in the second ; *as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive*, 1 Cor. xv. 22. *As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous*, Rom. v. 19. And as in Adam we fell from the happy estate in which we were created, so we were restored to it, by being created again in Christ Jesus.

But that we may be so, as we come by nature from the first Adam, we must come to the last by faith, that is, we must believe and trust on him for it, according to the revelations that God hath given us, and the promises which he hath made us in him ; that being the way that God himself hath appointed in his holy word, whereby to come to Christ, so as to have all that he did and suffered in our common nature applied to our own particular persons ; as appears from the whole design and tenor of the Gospel, where faith is all along required in order to our obtaining any of the blessings that he hath merited for us, insomuch that they who do not believe, have no part or portion in him, no more than as if he had never been made man, but are still in their natural state, just as they proceeded from the first Adam ; whereas they who truly believe, are taken out of the first, and grafted into the second, so as to be made branches of him the true vine, members of that body whereof Christ himself is head ; and being in him, they partake of all the merits of the death he suf-

ferred, and of all that he ever did or is now doing in their nature ; in him they have pardon and peace, in him they have righteousness and strength, in him they are made new creatures, for they are *created in Christ*.

They are created much after the same manner as all things were at first ; for as all things were at first created by the word of God, so are they by the word made flesh, and by the word made known unto them ; for they are created or *born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveih and abideth for ever*, 1 Pet. i. 23. There is only this difference, that whereas in the first creation of all things, there being nothing to believe or disbelieve his word, *God only commanded, and they were created*, Psal. cxlviii. 5. but in this new creation, men being before made, and made free agents, capable of believing or not believing what is said, *the word worketh effectually only in them who believe*, 1 Thess. ii. 13. And that is the reason, that none but they who believe are created in Christ Jesus ; but all that do so are.

Again, when God in the beginning had created the heavens and the earth, it is said, *that the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters*, Gen. i. 2. so that by *the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath or spirit of his mouth*, Psal. xxxiii. 6. He first by his word raised the heavens out of nothing, giving them a being or existence in general ; then by his Spirit, he made all the hosts of them, that is, all things wherewith they were to be furnished and adorned, bringing them all into their proper place and order, that every thing might be, and act, and move, as he designed it should ; so here, when any are created in Christ Jesus, his Spirit moves upon their souls, and reduces all their powers and faculties into a right order and disposition again, *so as to quicken*, John vi. 63. *renew*, Tit. iii. 5. *regenerate*, John iii. 5. and make them another sort of creatures than they were before ; before they were natural, now supernatural ;

before carnal, now spiritual creatures ; *for that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*, John iii. 6. As they were at first born, they were all flesh ; by this new birth, they are all over spirit, of the same pure and spiritual nature with him of whom they are born again ; and therefore as before *they were the offspring of Adam, they are now made the children of God*, Rom. viii. 14. *and if the children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, in whom they are thus created*, ver. 17. Such a wonderful change is wrought in those who are created in Christ Jesus, in all respects as much to be admired as the first creation of all things out of nothing.

Moreover, as in the first creation, the first particular thing that God made was *light*, Gen. i. 3. so it is in this new creation : before God made light, it is said, *that darkness was upon the face of the abyss or deep*, ver. 2. And so it is in this case, darkness is upon the face of all mankind by nature ; the worst sort of darkness, even spiritual darkness, covers them all over ; so that although they have eyes to see other things, they cannot see the things that belong to their everlasting peace, nor discern so much as the true difference between good and evil ; much less can they see God, though his glory shines continually about them, no more than a man that is stark blind can see the sun at noon-day ; and as for the Gospel of Christ, they are so far from seeing any thing of that, that they laugh at those who profess to see any thing in it ; as the apostle observes, *the preaching of Christ crucified is to the Jews a stumblingblock, and to the Greeks foolishness*, 1 Cor. i. 23. and all because the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, *for they are foolishness to him ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*, 1 Cor. ii. 14.

There are many such natural men in the world ; indeed the far greatest part of men are such, but the condition of all such is very sad and deplorable ; for how-

ever they may flatter themselves at present, they will find the apostle's words to be true, *If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost ; in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them,* 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. If they believed, the God of this world could have no power over them : but seeing they will not believe, he carrieth them captive at his will, keeps them in the dark, and leads them blindfold to the place allotted for unbelievers. Neither is it possible to be avoided without having their eyes opened : *they must first be turned from darkness to light, before they can be turned from the power of Satan unto God,* Acts xxvi. 18. But *God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines in the hearts of those who are created anew, to give them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ,* 2 Cor. iv. 6. *who is the light of the world,* John viii. 12. *the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,* John i. 9. So that no man ever had or can have any light but from him. *Who therefore saith that he came a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on him should not abide in darkness,* John xii. 46. And therefore all who believe, and so are created in him, are so far from abiding any longer in darkness, that they are immediately enlightened by him with such a light, whereby they both see and feel the wondrous things of his Law and Gospel, and all things relating to their eternal happiness and salvation, which lie hid to all other mortals ; for he the Sun of righteousness shines not only about them and upon them, but in them ; spreading his bright beams all over their hearts, so as not only to open the eyes of their understanding, but to fill their whole souls with so clear a sight, and so quick a sense of what he would have them to believe and do, that their wills also are inclined to it. There is no need of any force ; for when they so plainly see it to be for their

own benefit and advantage, they cannot but of their own accord choose to believe and live as he would have them. This is that marvellous light to which they are called, *who are created in Jesus Christ*, 1 Pet. ii. 9.

Passing over the other parts of the creation, let us in the next place consider how man himself was at first made. God said, *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*, Gen. i. 26. Here we see several persons were pleased to manifest themselves as concerned and agreeing in making man, which could be no other than those who are before mentioned or implied in the rest of the creation, *even God himself*, ver. 1 *the Spirit of God*, ver. 2. *and the Word*, ver. 3. *By whom all things were made*, John i. 3. Eph. iii. 9. Col. i. 16. So it was when the second man was made. *The Word was then made flesh*, John i. 14. He was made so by the Spirit of God coming upon the blessed Virgin, and by the power of the Highest overshadowing her; *and was therefore called the Son of God, even of God the Father*, Luke i. 35. And so it is also when any particular men are created in Christ Jesus. They are created by the Father, the Creator of all things: he creates them in his Son, Christ, and by his Spirit moving upon them, as we before shewed.

But that which is chiefly to be observed in our present case, is, *that God created man in his own image, after his own likeness*, as like unto himself as it was possible for such a creature to be made in knowledge, holiness, and power over all earthly creatures; and as the first man was made in the image of God, so the second, even Jesus Christ, *he is the image of God*, 2 Cor. iv. 4. Col. i. 15: *the express image of his person*, Heb. i. 3. And when any are created in him, they are said to put on Christ, and so *the image of God*, Rom. xiii. 14. Gal. iii. 27 *and to put on the new man, which after God, or according to his likeness, is created in righteousness and true holi-*

ness, Eph. iv. 24. and renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him, Col. iii. 10. And therefore all such partake of the divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4. even of the holiness of God, which is his nature, Heb. xii. 10. being made holy, as he who hath called them is holy, in all manner of conversation, 1 Pet. i. 15.

From these things thus briefly touched upon, we may see how truly they who believe, as the Gospel requires, are here said to be created in Christ Jesus, what excellent creatures they are made, and how far they exceed all other men, and themselves too before they were so created. Before, their whole souls were disordered and out of tune, now they are restored to a right frame and temper again, they have a right understanding and judgment in all necessary things. They always exercise themselves to keep their consciences void of offence towards God and men. They look upon all things in the world as nothing in comparison of him that made them; and therefore they love him with all their hearts, they put their whole trust and confidence in him, they fear nothing but him, they rejoice continually in him, and account it their only pleasure to please him, and their greatest honour to honour him. It grieves them to the heart to see his holy name dishonoured, or his service slighted; and if they themselves ever happen to omit their daily prayers, or any duty which they owe to him, they are restless and uneasy until they return to it; for their minds being wholly bent upon doing what he whose image they bear would have them, whatsoever draws them aside, goes against the grain; they set the Lord God Almighty always before them, and therefore are always humble and lowly in their own eyes, and meek, patient, and submissive to his divine will; in short, the law of God being written again in their hearts, their whole nature is changed; insomuch, that as all things naturally tend to their proper end, so do they to that for which they are created.

What that is, the apostle here teacheth, saying, *that we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works* ; we are not created to sit still and do nothing, much less to do ill ; but to do good works ; that is the end of the second creation, as it was of the first. At first, *the Lord made all things for himself*, Prov xvi. 4. even to shew forth the glory of his infinite wisdom, power, goodness, and such other perfections as could be exerted in the contrivance, production, and establishment of the world, and all things in it ; but here are two of his divine perfections, even grace, or mercy, and truth, for which there was yet no occasion or object ; but when man was fallen, he was pleased to manifest them, by redeeming or creating him again in Christ Jesus. By whom it is therefore said, *that grace and truth came*, or appeared in the world, John i. 17. Grace, in the many promises which he hath made to fallen man ; and his truth, in the faithful performance of the same.

Now this will give us great light into what we are to understand by the good works unto which we are created in Christ Jesus. Not that divine temper of mind, or those excellent qualities and virtues wherewith such are inwardly endued, but such overt acts which proceed from them to the honour and glory of our almighty Creator. This we learn from our Lord's own words to his disciples, *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*, Matt. v. 6. For from hence it appears, that although we are not to do good works therefore only that men may see them, and so make that our end in doing them, yet that our works may be good, they must be such as men may see, and glorify God for them ; according to that of his apostle also to all Christians, *having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation*, 1 Pet. ii. 12. They should be such works as men may behold, and

praise and glorify God for giving such power to men, that they who of themselves can do nothing but sin, should be enabled by him to do good, which is much for the glory of his grace and truth revealed in the Gospel of Christ ; and the great end wherefore any are created in him, even *to shew forth the praises or virtues of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light*, 1 Pet. ii. 9. And therefore as all such are to aim at *the glory of God* in all their works, without which they cannot be good, 1 Cor. x. 31. so they must strive all they can to do such works as may really tend to his glory, as ever they desire to answer the end of their creation, by doing good works.

To make this more plain, it will be necessary to instance in some of those works which are truly good, and therefore commanded, because of their tendency to the ultimate end of all things, even the glory of our almighty Creator and most merciful Saviour ; as for example, to make open and public profession to the world of our faith in God and our Saviour, according to the revelations which he hath made of himself and his will to mankind in the holy Scripture, given by his inspiration ; to testify and confirm that our profession by our constant attendance at his public worship ; to adore and pray to him, and him alone, for what we want, and to praise his holy name for the wondrous works that he hath done and still doth in the world ; to frequent that holy sacrament which he hath ordained in memory of the death he suffered in our nature, and for our salvation ; to vindicate and defend his church, wherein alone he is truly served and glorified, against all its enemies, that, according to his promise, *the gates of hell may never prevail against it* ; to do what we can that his name may be known and his Gospel propagated all the world over, that all kings may fall down before him, and all nations serve him ; to erect, support, endow, and adorn places where he may be duly and devoutly worshipped, and to see that his worship be accordingly per-

formed by all that we have any power over, especially by ourselves ; to instruct young and ignorant people in the principles of the Christian religion, that they may know the true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, and what he would have them to believe and do, that they may serve him, and be happy ; to instruct those also in meekness who oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth ; to reprove and rebuke such as blaspheme or profane God's holy name, or dishonour his Gospel by any lewd and immoral practices ; to use all means to bring them to a sense of their sin, and so turn them to righteousness and true holiness ; to administer justice truly and indifferently to the punishment of wickedness and vice, and to the maintenance of God's true religion and virtue ; to compose any differences that arise in church or state, or between private persons, and so make peace ; to succour, help, and comfort such as are in danger, necessity, or any tribulation ; to defend and provide for the fatherless children and widows, the sick and needy, desolate or oppressed, and all for his sake, who hath promised to take care of such ; to be true and just in all our dealings with men, that they may see we prefer our duty before any worldly interest ; to choose resolutely to suffer the loss of all we have, even of life itself, rather than do any thing whereby we may seem to deny God, dishonour his holy name, or wilfully break his laws : these, and such like, which appear at first sight to tend to the honour and glory of the most high God, are the good works unto which we are created in Christ Jesus, and which we are therefore all bound to do, according to our several abilities.

Which I therefore add, because it is implied in the following words of my text. The apostle here saying, *that we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained*, or, as the word signifies, *prepared, that we should walk in them*. For as he hath prepared us to walk in good works, so he hath

prepared good works for us to walk in. They who are created in Christ Jesus, are thereby restored to a sound mind, and every way qualified and disposed to do what their Creator would have them. They are enlightened, renewed, sanctified, and led by his good Spirit, and therefore as naturally do good works, as a good tree bringeth forth good fruit. But as every good tree bringeth forth its own proper fruit, such as God designed it should when he made it, so every one that is created in Christ Jesus, doth such good works as he hath fore-ordained or prepared for them to do. None of them can do all, but every one doth all he can in that place and state of life, in which God is pleased for that purpose to set him. Some he advanceth to an higher degree, to greater authority, and larger estates than others, and for them he therefore hath prepared greater and more good works to do, than for those which he confines to a lower rank and narrower circumstances. But there is no condition that a man can be in, be it never so mean, but he hath some good works or other prepared for him, which he may do if he will, and will too, if he be created in Christ Jesus. Otherwise, he may conclude himself not to be created in him. He in the parable that had but *one talent*, was bound to improve that one, as he who had *five*, improved all his five, for his master's use; and because he did it not, he was judged to be a *wicked and slothful servant*, and punished accordingly, Matt. xxi. 30.

Wherefore it highly concerns us who believe in God *to be careful to maintain good works*, Tit. iii. 8. Not only some few, but all which God hath prepared that we should walk in them. Not only do them now and then by the by, but walk in them through the whole course of our life, keeping always as close as we can to the steps of our great Master, *who went about doing good*, Acts x. 38. So should we who profess ourselves to be his disciples, and created in him unto good works. We should be always doing, or at least contriving how

to do good in the world, that we may not live in vain and to no purpose, as most people do, but to the great end for which we were created.

I am very sensible, that we can never set about any good work, especially if it be more than ordinary, but we shall meet with many rubs and difficulties in the way, raised by the common adversary of mankind, or such as he employs to hinder all good, and carry on his wicked designs. But we must not regard that, but still go on, trusting and depending upon him who sets us on work, to carry us through it. *We can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us*, Phil. iv. 13. As it is in him that we are created unto good works, in him we have strength to do all that he requires of us, who requires no more than what we can do by his assistance. And if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted, *according to what a man hath, not according to what he hath not*, 2 Cor. viii. 12.

It is accepted, not for any worth or merit in what we do, but through him by whom we do it, who doth not only supply us with grace to obey the will of God, as far as is required in this our imperfect state, but makes up the defects of our obedience with the merits of his own. For he having in our nature been obedient through the whole course of his life unto death, as God is pleased to accept of his death instead of ours, so he accepts of our obedience for the sake of his, whatsoever is wanting in our persons being abundantly supplied by the infinite merits of what he did and suffered in our nature. And hence it is, that they who are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, really do the good work unto which they are created. For though the works they do be not perfectly in themselves good, yet God is pleased to look upon them as good, through him in whom they are created; otherwise they could not be called good works, as they are in this and many other places of holy Scripture. Wherein we are also assured, that all the spiritual sacrifices we offer, all the good works

we do, although in themselves imperfect, *yet are acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*, 1 Pet. ii. 5. which therefore that ours may be, whensoever we have done any good work, we must lift our hearts to Christ in heaven, and trust on him to perfume it with the incense of his merits, and then we need not doubt but God will be well pleased with it.

The premises being thus briefly laid down, it is easy to observe, that as none can do good works, but they who are created in Christ Jesus ; so to manifest ourselves to be created in him, it is absolutely necessary that we do all the good works we can, in our several vocations and callings ; and that they who do so, are the most happy persons upon earth, whatsoever their outward condition may be, and howsoever other people may say or think of them. For they do the will of God upon earth, as it is done in heaven : they shine as lights in the world : they have the honour to *honour God*, and to *be honoured by him*, 1 Sam. ii. 30. They have the pleasure of pleasing him that governs the whole world, who therefore takes them into his own particular care and protection, makes *their enemies to be at peace with them*, Prov. xvi. 7 supplies them with all things necessary both for life and godliness ; directs and prospers them in all their undertakings : makes all things work together for their good while they live, and then saith to every one of them, *Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Heb. xiii. 20, 21.

S E R M O N L I .

STEDFASTNESS TO THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH
RECOMMENDED.

1 Cor. xv. 58.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

AS certain as we are now alive, it is not long but we shall be all dead ; and as certainly as we ever die, we shall one day rise again ; that is, the same bodies out of which our souls depart, howsoever they are dissolved in the mean while, and their parts dispersed and scattered about, shall be put together again, and shall be quickened and informed by the same souls which departed from them ; and so the same individual persons that died before, shall live again, yea, so live as never to die more.

This is that great article of our Christian faith, which the apostle in this chapter doth not only assert and prove from many undeniable arguments, but likewise discourses at large concerning the cause, the manner, and the effects, or consequences of it, especially with reference to those who die in the true faith of Christ, real and sound members of that body whereof he is head ; concerning whom he assures us, that every one of their bodies, though it be as seed sown and rotten in the ground.

it shall afterwards grow up and flourish more than ever. *It is sown, saith he, in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body,* ver. 42, 43, 44. A spiritual body, it will be a body still, consisting of the same elements it did before, but so rarely tempered, that it will subsist without meat or drink, and be subject neither to heat, nor cold, nor hunger, nor thirst, nor weariness, nor ache, nor pain, nor any disease or distemper whatsoever, but will be always as fresh and lively, as nimble and active, as subservient and obedient to the soul, as if itself was purely spiritual; so that this corruptible body, which the soul is now clothed withal, *will then put on incorruption, this mortal body will put on immortality,* ver. 53. that is, it will always be a fit and proper vehicle for the soul to move in, which therefore shall never any more depart from it, and so it will become incorruptible and immortal, never subject to death or corruption, but be always acted, influenced, and governed by the immortal soul that dwelleth in it; so that death shall then be swallowed up in victory, so perfectly overcome, that it shall cease to be; there shall never be any more separation of the soul and body; but they shall live together like loving mates, in glory, and joy, and bliss for evermore.

These things being thus premised by the apostle in this chapter, concerning the resurrection of the dead, he concludes it with the words which I have now read, which are only an inference or corollary drawn from the said premises; as if he had said, *Seeing the dead shall all rise again, and seeing they who die in the Lord Jesus shall live with him and be happy for ever; therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, &c.*

Where we may observe by the way, how the apostle having explained and proved the great doctrine of the resurrection, and coming now to apply it to the Corin-

thians, to whom he wrote, and in them to all Christians, the better to prepare and dispose them to receive and observe what he was now to press upon them, he ushers it in with this friendly compellation, *my beloved brethren*; that so calling them not only his brethren, as all are in Christ, but brethren in a particular manner beloved by him, he might thereby give them to understand, that what he was now to put them in mind of, from his apostolical discourse concerning the resurrection, and the application he was about to make of the same doctrine to them, proceeded from that brotherly love and kindness which he had for them, that he had no other end or design in it, but what one true friend hath for another, even to do them good, by putting them in mind of those duties, which necessarily follow from the doctrine he hath now delivered; *therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, &c.* Having therefore thus prepared the way, he acquaints them with three great duties now incumbent upon them, which he earnestly exhorteth them to observe; *be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*; and then he enforceth his exhortation with this urgent reason, drawn from what he had premised concerning the resurrection, *forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord*; which reason always holding good, the duties grounded upon it must needs be likewise of perpetual obligation, and by consequence necessary to be observed now as much as ever, and by us as much as by any other; which therefore that they may be, we shall briefly consider and explain the true meaning of each of them as they lie in order

First, saith he, *be ye stedfast*, that is, well grounded and settled, as the word signifieth, in the Christian religion, as the way to obtain a glorious resurrection; which we cannot fail of, if we continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not *moved away from the hope of the Gospel*, as the same apostle expresseth it in his Epistle to the Colossians, chap. i. 23. To whom

therefore he gives this apostolical advice, *As ye have received Christ Jesus, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving*, chap. ii. 6, 7 which is the same in effect with that in my text, *be ye stedfast*.

But what it is in the Christian religion that we ought in a more particular manner to be stedfast in, we may learn from what the Holy Ghost hath left upon record concerning the first converts to it after our Lord's ascension, where he saith, that *they continued stedfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers*, Acts ii. 42. which are plainly the true marks or notes of a Christian church, whereby it may be distinguished from all other assemblies or bodies of men, and which by consequence all persons must be stedfast in, who desire to continue real and sound members of that church which Christ Jesus hath established in the world.

1. They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine; they did not only hearken to what the apostles said, and believed what they taught, but they continued constant, firm, and stedfast in it, so as to believe nothing as necessary to salvation, but what the apostles taught them, but to believe every thing that the apostles taught them, as necessary to salvation, being confident that the apostles, being acted and directed in what they taught by the Spirit of God himself, would never teach them any thing either untrue or impertinent; nothing but what was both infallibly certain, and absolutely necessary for them to know and believe in order to their obtaining eternal salvation by Jesus Christ; and therefore they would not hearken to any Jewish fables, nor philosophical speculations, nor yet to their own fancies, nor to the opinions of other men; but kept close to the doctrine of the Gospel, as delivered to them by the apostles of Christ, the first founder of it, who gave them authority to preach it, and assisted them with his own Spirit

in the preaching of it, that so they might be sure to preach nothing but what he would have them, nothing but what was agreeable to those eternal truths, that he himself had before revealed to them: this the first Christians knew, and therefore would never give ear to any other teachers but the apostles themselves, and such as were sent by them; and this indeed was one of the doctrines which the apostles taught, that they should not hearken to any other doctrine but what they taught, but keep fast to that; as where St. Paul saith to Timothy, *Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus*, 2 Tim. i. 13. And St. Peter, writing to all Christians, saith, *This second epistle, beloved, I write unto you, in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour*, 2 Pet. iii. 1, 2. The prophets and apostles being all acted with the same Spirit, what they commanded to men to believe or to do, that was necessary to be accordingly believed and done, and nothing else; and therefore he adviseth all to continue steadfastly in their doctrine, without minding what others said or taught.

And this certainly is the first and great thing that Christians in all ages ought to be steadfast in, even in the doctrine which Christ and his apostles taught, for that is the foundation of our whole religion; and therefore unless we be well grounded in that, all our hopes of salvation will soon fall to the ground; it is by this that we believe aright in God, and in Jesus Christ whom he hath sent; and it is by this also that we rightly understand our duty both to God and man; and therefore without this we can neither believe nor live according to the Gospel of Christ, and by consequence can never be saved by him.

Wherefore, as ever ye desire to be saved, ye must be sure to be stedfast in the doctrine, which the apostles of Christ by his order and commission delivered at first by word of mouth, and afterwards in writing, that all generations might know it, by which means we are now as fully assured of what the apostles taught, as they could be which heard them speak it. Their doctrine being transmitted to us by the infallible testimony of the Holy Ghost, by which they spake and writ it in that holy book which we call the New Testament; so that whatsoever we there read, as taught by the apostles, we are sure was their doctrine, and therefore are bound stedfastly to believe it, and diligently to frame our lives according to it; but what we do not find there written, we can never be sure that they taught it, and therefore cannot be obliged to believe or observe it.

And hence appears the excellency of our church, in that it requires nothing to be believed as an article of faith, or as necessary to salvation, but what the apostles first taught, and what the church of Christ in all ages hath believed to be consonant to the doctrine contained in their writings; but whatsoever opinion hath no ground or foundation in the said apostolical writings, that ours together with the catholic church rejecteth, as either utterly false, or at best not necessary to be believed; and therefore in order to your continuing stedfast, as the first Christians did, in the apostles' doctrine, the surest way is to keep close to the doctrine of our church, which is plainly the same with that of the apostles in all points, without any addition, diminution, or alteration whatsoever; which is the great glory of our church, and should make us not only to continue firm and dutiful to it, but likewise to thank God that we live in such a church, wherein we are duly instructed in all the great truths which our Saviour and his apostles taught, and are not required to believe any thing else, as necessary to our being saved; by which means as

our minds may be enlightened, and our hearts purified by that faith which was once delivered to the saints ; so we are secure from falling into any damnable heresy, and from being corrupted or perplexed with any of those new and dangerous opinions which the ignorance and superstition of after-ages have brought into the church.

What this doctrine of our church is, you may easily understand ; as from the holy Scriptures themselves, so likewise from the Liturgy and Articles of our church, which are all taken out of the said Scriptures, or grounded upon them ; and therefore whatsoever doctrine is contradicted by anything contained in our Liturgy or Articles, you may be sure it is contrary to something asserted in the holy Scriptures ; whatsoever doctrine is no where taught or declared there, you may be as confident that the apostles never declared or taught it ; and by consequence you are so far from being obliged to believe it, that you are rather obliged not to believe it, as a necessary article of our Christian faith, howsoever specious or plausible it may seem to you ; but whatsoever doctrine you find to be clearly propounded, asserted, or suggested either in our Articles or Common Prayer Book, you may and ought to rest fully satisfied in your minds, that that is the true doctrine of the apostles, which you ought to continue firm and stedfast in.

But the first Christians, as they continued *stedfastly* in the apostles' *doctrine*, so likewise in *fellowship*, or communion with them, as it follows in the text before mentioned, Acts ii. 42. For the understanding of which, we may observe, that these persons being now baptized according to Christ's institution, they were thereby admitted into the number of his disciples, and so were incorporated into him, and made members of that body whereof he is head, which is a distinct society from the rest of mankind, founded by Christ himself, by the name of his church, which he promised to be always

with, and to assist with his own Spirit, in the use of those means which he had instituted, and appointed to be there administered for our obtaining that salvation which he purchased for us with his own blood ; and therefore it is there said, *that the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved*, ver. 47 For which purpose he ordained and deputed his apostles and their successors to instruct and govern the said society, and to take care that all who are admitted into it, might have the said means of grace duly administered to them, that so they might want nothing necessary to their being saved by him.

Now these persons being of this society, *fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God*, as St. Paul expresseth it, Eph. ii. 19. they always kept company and held communion with them, not only in receiving and believing the doctrine which the apostles taught them, but likewise observing the rules and orders which they appointed, and using all the means of grace and salvation, as administered by them, so as not to divide themselves into parties and factions, nor separate from that holy society they were now admitted into, under any pretence whatsoever.

And in this also we ought to follow their good example. It is our great happiness that we are of the same apostolic church as they were, and therefore ought to continue stedfastly in fellowship and communion with it, as they did. It is true, there were not so many schisms and divisions in the church then, as there are now ; but the reason was, because the people did not make them, as many do in our days, who notwithstanding that they are admitted into our church, are so far from continuing stedfast in communion with it, that they never think they can separate themselves far enough from it. But let such persons do what they please, and take what follows : I must advise and beseech you in his name, that laid down his own life to save you, and for the same purpose hath brought you into his church, that

you would hold constant communion with it, as by believing the doctrine, so by loving the members, observing the orders, and submitting to the discipline of it, and exercising yourselves continually in the means of grace, as they are constantly and duly administered in it. For so long as you do so, you are certainly in the ready way to heaven ; whereas, if you leave the church, and run into corners and separate congregations, you expose yourselves at least to very great uncertainties about your salvation.

While you live constantly in the communion of our church, you are sure to enjoy all the means which Christ hath appointed for your salvation, faithfully administered in the same way and manner that he appointed ; you are sure to be fully instructed in your whole duty both to God and man ; you are sure to pray together in such a form, as both for the matter and method and manner of it agrees exactly with the word of God : you are sure to have the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper administered unto you, according to Christ's own institution, without any additions to it, or detractions from it ; you are sure to have all this done, by persons rightly ordained and authorized thereunto by Christ himself, and you are sure that what they teach you is sound and orthodox, the very same doctrine which Christ and his apostles taught ; for when they are ordained, they solemnly profess and promise in the presence of God, that they will instruct the people committed to their charge out of the holy Scriptures ; and that they will teach nothing (as required of necessity to eternal salvation) but what they are persuaded may be concluded and proved by the said Scriptures ; neither can they afterwards be admitted to preach, till they have subscribed to the Articles and Liturgy of our church ; in which, as I observed before, the doctrine of the apostles is fully contained. And besides all this, so long as you continue in the communion of our church, you are sure to have the words and sacraments administered to you, by those who have the charge of your souls committed to

them, and who are therefore obliged both in duty and interest to take as much care of you as themselves, their own eternal salvation depending in a great measure upon their faithful discharge of their office towards you. To which also God hath promised the assistance to his own grace, and Holy Spirit to make it effectual to you for the great ends and purposes for which it is ordained. So that all things considered, it is morally impossible that you should be led into error, be ignorant of the truth, or miss of grace and salvation, if you hold constant communion with our church, and sincerely believe and live accordingly as you are there taught.

But if you leave the communion or fellowship of our church, or join yourselves to any of the sects which are risen up among us, as you will be certain to want many of the means of grace which you here enjoy, you will be uncertain whether you shall enjoy any of them, so as to attain the end for which they are appointed, even the salvation of your souls ; for you will be uncertain whether they who administer them be lawfully called and sent by Christ to do it, as be sure many of them are not. You will be uncertain whether you can join with them in prayer ; for in some places they know not what they say, in other places they themselves know not what they intend to say, until they have said it, and how then can you know it ? You will be uncertain whether you shall ever receive any benefit from the sacrament of the Lord's supper ; for some never administer it at all, others do it either so imperfectly or irregularly, that the virtue and efficacy of it is very much impaired, if not quite destroyed. You will be uncertain, whether they preach the true doctrine of the Gospel, for they never subscribed to it, nor solemnly promised to preach that and no other ; neither are they ever called to account for any thing they say or teach, be it never so false or contrary to what Christ and his apostles taught ; so that they may lead you blindfold whithersoever they please, without control : and, after all, you will be uncertain whether they seek you or yours ; for they have no more obliga-

tion upon them to take care of your souls, than you have to take care of theirs : and therefore the most favourable and the most charitable construction that can be put upon the separation from our church is, that it is leaving a certainty for an uncertainty, which no wise man would do in any thing, much less in a matter upon which his eternal happiness and salvation depends ; from whence ye may easily observe, that it is your wisdom and interest, as well as duty, to be stedfast as in the doctrine, so likewise in fellowship or communion with the church, as the first disciples were.

The next thing they continued stedfastly in was breaking of bread, or the celebration of the Lord's supper ; which is so necessary to our holding communion with the church, that it hath got the name almost wholly appropriated to itself, being commonly called the communion, because in it we communicate both with Christ the head, and in him with all the sound members of his mystical body, the church. In this therefore they continued stedfastly ; that is, they never failed to receive the Lord's supper when it was administered, which was at least every Lord's day, as is plain from Acts xx. 7 where it is said, *and upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread.* From whence it appears also, that this was the great and principal end of their meeting together upon that day, even to communicate in Christ's mystical body and blood ; which therefore they all did, none offering to go away without partaking of that heavenly food ; and if any presumed to do it, without shewing very just cause for it, they were looked upon as heathens and publicans, and therefore cast out of the church as not worthy to be of that holy society ; neither was this severe discipline used only in the apostles' times, but a good while after, as appears from the canons of the primitive church, which are so ancient that they are called apostolical ; and as you desire to be such holy persons as they were, you must be sure to make as much conscience of this

holy duty as they did. Blessed be God for it, you have the same opportunity as they had, of receiving the holy sacrament every Lord's day, and therefore be advised to follow their example, in being constantly at it, or at least as oft as possibly you can ; do not let every little trifling worldly business deprive you of the greatest blessing you can have on this side heaven : you cannot but all acknowledge, that the merits of Christ's death, which are there offered to you, are infinitely beyond all the crowns and sceptres upon earth, and therefore let not any thing in this world hinder you from partaking of them : many of you, I dare say, have found by your own experience unspeakable comfort and advantage, by frequent or constant applying yourselves to your blessed Saviour in that holy sacrament, and you would all do so, if you would but make trial of it ; which therefore I must again advise and beseech you all to do, especially those whose souls are committed to my care. I know I must give an account of my charge one day to my great Lord and Master Jesus Christ, and therefore dare not but administer this as well as the other means that he hath appointed for your salvation, as oft as he and his church requires it ; and in his name I beseech and admonish you to be as careful and constant in the use of it, so that I may deliver up my accounts with joy, and not with grief ; which I do not question but I shall do it, if you would but continue stedfastly as in doctrine and fellowship, so in breaking of bread, and in prayers, which is the last thing which the disciples are there said to continue stedfastly in : in prayers, that is, in the public prayers of the church ; for what they did in private, every one by himself, could not be so well known ; neither was it so material to know that, as how they carried themselves in relation to the church, that fellowship or communion of saints, into which they were now admitted, with whom they constantly joined in their public devotions, or such prayers as were common to them all, and so both testified their communion with them, and as

sisted in the worship of the most high God, and imploring his mercy for all in general, as well as every one for himself in particular, and that not only now and then, but every day, or as oft as possibly they could.

And in this also we ought to follow their good and pious example, by being stedfast and constant, not only in our private but public devotions, according to that excellent apostolical form, which our church hath prescribed on purpose, that all the members of it, not only in this kingdom, but wheresoever they are, might join together in one heart and mind, in hearing God's holy word, in praying to him, and praising his most glorious name ; and therefore, all that desire to live and act as becometh the real and sound members of ours, as she is the catholic and apostolic church, should take all opportunities they can get of performing their solemn and public devotions to God, according to the said form. This being the principal means whereby to obtain the illuminations and assistances of God's Holy Spirit, to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, and to persevere to the end in so doing.

And indeed, I know nothing in the world that, by the grace and blessing of God, contributes more to our steadiness in the doctrine and communion of our church, than frequent receiving of the holy sacrament, and constant attendance at her public prayers, which, whosoever doth heartily and sincerely as he ought, may defy the very gates of hell, for they will never be able to prevail against him ; whereas, they who make no conscience of these great duties, are in continual danger of being caught in the next trap that shall be laid for them.

Thus now you see what are the chief things in which you ought to be stedfast ; you ought to be stedfast in the apostles' doctrine, stedfast in fellowship or communion, stedfast in breaking of bread, and stedfast in prayers ; and if you be stedfast in these things, you will be so in all things, wherein you need be stedfast, in or-

der to your obtaining eternal bliss, and so perform the first duty enjoined in my text, *be ye stedfast*.

But the foundation of an house may be well laid, and the superstructure so carefully raised, that it may continue strong and stedfast for some time, and yet nevertheless, such storms and tempests may afterwards beat upon it, as may make it shake and move to and fro, and at last, perhaps, fall down to the ground again ; so it is in religion : a man may be well grounded in the fundamental articles of our Christian faith, and make some considerable progress in the practice of it, so as to continue stedfastly for a while in it, and yet after all may, by the violence of temptations, or some other way, be moved and seduced from it ; and therefore, as the apostle adviseth us, not only to be stedfast, but unmoveable too, as the house which our Lord saith was *built upon a rock, and the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was built upon a rock*, Matt. vii. 25. or, as the same apostle elsewhere expresseth it, *that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive*, Eph. iv. 14.

This was a necessary caution in those days, and so it is in ours, there being as much sleight and cunning craftiness used now, to pervert and draw men from the church, if not much more than ever ; and therefore, all that mind religion in good earnest, so as to obtain the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls, had need to have a care, and not suffer themselves to be tossed to and fro with every new wind of doctrine that is raised among us, but to resolve, by the grace of God, to continue not only firm and stedfast to the church, but immoveable, as the rock upon which it is built ; for which purpose therefore, you must not give heed to those seducing spirits, which would draw you off from the church, under the pretence of greater purity, stricter

devotion, or higher perfection than is commonly practised, or can be obtained in it ; for this is an old artifice which the devil hath made use of all along, to impose upon well-meaning people : if he should appear in his own colours as the prince of darkness, all men would withstand him, or else run from him ; and therefore he *transforms himself into an angel of light*, and under that disguise he insinuates himself into ignorant and unwary people, and *carrieth them captive* as he pleaseth ; this we may be sure of, for St. Paul saith it, 2 Cor. xi. 14. And a greater than St. Paul, Christ himself, forewarns us of the same thing, saying, *beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves*, Matt. vii. 15. whereby he plainly intimates, that there will always be false prophets in the church, such as the devil sends upon his errands, but that he will always send them in sheep's clothing, like innocent and harmless lambs, whereas, in truth, they are ravening wolves, sent on purpose to devour and destroy the flock ; but our Saviour bids us to beware of them ; and so we had need be, for it was by such that all the errors, heresies, and schisms, that ever infested the church, were first sown in it.

And indeed, as Christ and his apostles foretold it, so there always have been such false prophets, and false teachers in the church, who, under the colour of greater purity in doctrine and worship, hath seduced men into all manner of heresy and sin. *This know*, saith the apostle, *that in the latter days perilous times shall come ; for men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous boasters, proud—having a form or shew of godliness, but denying the power thereof ; from which turn away ; for of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts*, 2 Tim. iii. 1, 2, 5, 6. Such were they in the primitive church, that called themselves τὸς καθαρὸς, *the pure*, as pretending to be more pure and holy than others ; such have been in all ages, and such there are

in ours, who blame our Reformation as defective, as if the church were not reformed, not purged enough from the errors it had before contracted; but if such would but lay aside all prejudices, and impartially consider the constitution of our church as it is now reformed, they might clearly see, that as there is nothing defective, so neither is there any thing superstitious in it, but that it exactly answers the pattern of the primitive and apostolical church itself, as near as it is possible for a national church to do it; insomuch, that they who truly believe all that she teaches, and practise all that she requireth, may be as pure and holy as any of the first Christians, or the apostles themselves were, or can be, so long as they continue in the church militant here on earth; and therefore, instead of making such frivolous and groundless exceptions against our church, do but you sincerely believe, and live as you are there taught, and you will be as pure and holy as you need to be upon earth, and as happy as you ever can be in heaven, and will be so far from being moved by such silly arguments to leave our church, that nothing will be able to move you to it, no, not any seeming miracles themselves, which is the highest sort of arguments—that can be used in matters of religion.

For our holy religion having been confirmed by many undoubted miracles, wrought for that purpose by Christ and his apostles, many have pretended miracles for the confirmation of their private opinions in it, howsoever erroneous and contrary to the nature of that religion which was so established; which therefore cannot possibly be real miracles, such as were at first wrought for the confirmation of our religion in general, but they must be delusions either of men or devils; for God having confirmed the Scripture, which is the standard of our religion, by miracles, nothing can be more absurd than to imagine that he should work miracles, to confirm any opinion that is contrary to the said Scriptures; and therefore the apostle saith, *though we or*

an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed, Gal. i. 8. If an angel should come down from heaven, with all his rays of glory and majesty shining about him, and so appear visible to us at this time, this would certainly be a very great miracle ; yet if he should preach any other Gospel than that which we have received, or affirm any thing contrary to what is there contained, we ought not to believe him, but rather defy and curse him, as one that would lead us out of the right way to heaven.

Neither must we wonder if there have been, or really should be, strange things wrought, (which look like miracles, though they are not so,) to confirm some in a false religion, to draw others into it ; for this is no more than what Christ himself hath foretold shall come to pass, saying, *There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect*, Matt. xxiv. 24. But then he adds, *Behold I have told you before*, ver. 25. and so forewarns us both to expect and slight them, and not to suffer ourselves to be moved at all by them, but still to keep close to that more sure word of prophecy which he hath delivered to us, notwithstanding all the signs and wonders that ever were, or ever can be wrought to divert us from it : and it is a great comfort to us, that our Lord himself here plainly intimates, that whatsoever becomes of others, it is not possible for the elect, who truly love and fear God, to be deceived by them.

But the greatest danger that people are in, of being perverted or seduced into error, heresy, schism, or superstition, is from their own lusts and passions, which either corrupt or overpower their judgments, and then carry them headlong into any thing that seems to gratify their prevailing humours, especially the love of this world ; the hopes of getting, or the fear of losing something in it, commonly stifles all the sense that

people have of religion, or else puts them upon acting contrary to it. This our Lord himself observes, where he tells us, that *the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and make it become unfruitful*, Matt. xiii. 22. *Demas hath forsaken me*, saith St. Paul, *having loved this present world*, 2 Tim. iv. 10. There have been many such Demas's in all ages, who out of love to this world, and preferring it before the favour of God and their own eternal happiness, have apostatized not only from the true religion to a false one, but from all religion to none at all: and verily it is no wonder; for *the love of money*, as St. Paul saith, *is the root of all evil*, 1 Tim. vi. 10. and therefore must needs be inconsistent with the love of God, the chiefest of all goods, as St. John tells us, 1 John ii. 15. Insomuch, that whosoever really loves the world, may be confident, that he doth not really love God; and he that doth not really love God, will be easily tempted to leave his service, whensoever it comes into competition with that which he prefers before it.

Hence also it comes to pass; that as some are allured from their religion by the hopes of gaining, others are affrighted out of it by the fear of losing this world, or something in it which they love better; as their estates, their honour, their ease, their liberty, or their life. These are things that are very dear to most men; and therefore, although they be not really in any danger, yet if they do but fear it, many are ready to do any thing to prevent it, even to the parting with their religion itself, if they imagine that will do it. We have had many instances of this in all ages. God grant that we may have none in ours, at least, not among us; for which end, it will be necessary to get our minds possessed with a true fear of God above all things in the world besides, and then we shall never be moved with the fear of any thing else, according to that remarkable promise that God hath made us, *I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me*, Jer.

xxxii. 40. Which we see notably exemplified in St. Paul, who having the fear of God always before his eyes, and in his heart, could never be moved from his duty unto God, by all the dangers and troubles he met with in it; *The Holy Ghost*, saith he, *witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God,* Acts xx. 23, 24. *None of these things move me!* Oh blessed temper of mind! This is to be unmoveable indeed, when nothing is able to move us from our duty to God, but we still continue firm and constant to that, whatsoever it costs us. So that the apostle here teacheth us, by his own example, how to do that which he requires in my text, saying, *Be ye stedfast, unmoveable.*

And then it follows, *always abounding in the work of the Lord*, which may well follow upon the former; for if we be unmoveable, we must needs be always abounding in the work of our Lord; in the work of the Lord, that is, in such works which the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the supreme Governor of the world, hath set us to do, whether they be works of piety to himself, or of justice and charity to our neighbour. But what are those works of piety which Almighty God hath commanded you to do to himself? He hath commanded you to love him with all your hearts and souls, with all your might and mind. He hath commanded you to sanctify his most holy name, and to make him your only fear and dread. He hath commanded you to put your whole trust and confidence on him, to rejoice continually in him, and to give up yourselves wholly unto him. He hath commanded you to submit yourselves to his divine will, and to make it your constant care and study to please and honour him. He hath commanded you to read and hear his most holy word, to pray without ceasing, and in every thing to

give thanks unto him. He hath commanded you frequently to receive the mystical body and blood of his dear Son, in remembrance of that death which he underwent for you. In short, he hath commanded you to worship and glorify him both in your souls and bodies, which are his.

And as to your neighbours ; he hath commanded you to bear no malice or hatred against them, but to love them as you love yourselves ; to honour and respect your parents, and to be loyal, obedient, and submissive to the king, and to carry yourselves lowly and reverently to all your governors both in church and state. He hath commanded you to be meek and humble in your own eyes, faithful to your word, just and righteous in all your dealings. He hath commanded you to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to instruct the ignorant, to comfort the disconsolate, to relieve the oppressed, to help the weak, to admonish the wicked, to love your very enemies, and to be true and trusty, and kind, and good, and charitable towards all men ; in a word he hath commanded you, *that whatsoever you would that men should do to you, that you do even so to them*, Matt. vii. 12.

These are, in short, those works of the Lord, which we are here commanded not only to do, but to abound in ; not as if we should or could do more than we are commanded, and so perform works of supererogation ; for we are bound to do all we can, and therefore can never do more than we are bound, unless we can do more than we can, which is impossible ; nay, we are so far from being able to do more than we are commanded, that when we have done all that is commanded us, we are still commanded to say, *We are unprofitable servants, we have done what was our duty to do*, Luke xvii. 10.

But in what respect then are we to be always abounding in the work of the Lord, both to ourselves and others ? In respect of ourselves, we are to be always

abounding, by growing always wiser and better, and doing more and more good if it be possible every day than other, according to that of the apostle to the Thessalonians, *Furthermore we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how you ought to walk and to please God, so you would abound more and more*, 1 Thess. iv. 1 And therefore you must not content yourselves with the exercise only of some graces, or with the lower degrees of any, but endeavour to be always adding one grace to another, and one degree of the same grace to another, still advancing higher and higher, until you come to the highest pitch of all: this St. Peter adviseth, where he saith, *Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity*, 2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7 But then he adds, *If these things be in you and abound, they make you that you shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*, ver. 8. so that it seems these several graces must not only be, but abound in us, and we must abound in them, by multiplying the acts, and so increasing the habits of them every day more and more; and unless we thus abound in the work of the Lord, we can never continue stedfast in it; and therefore the same apostle concludes his said Epistle, saying to all Christians, as I now say to you, *Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness. But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever*, 2 Pet. iii. 17, 18. Which is the same in effect with that in my text; *Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*.

But we must abound, not only in respect of ourselves, but of others too, so as to strive all we can to ex-

cel one another in virtue and goodness, to be strong in faith, rich in good works, eminent in meekness, in humility, in patience, in charity, and in every thing that is pleasing and acceptable to God; more constant in our devotions, more frequent at the communion, more reverent in the worship, more fervent in the service, more zealous for the glory of God, more sober in ourselves, more liberal to the poor, more just to all men, than others commonly are; *that our light may so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven*, Matt. v. 16. or, as the apostle words it, *that we may shine as lights in the world*, Phil. ii. 15. That all who are about us may be enlightened, inflamed, and excited by our example to serve the same Master, and to prosecute the same designs that we do in the world; even to glorify him that sent us hither. This is the best way to convince gainsayers of the excellency of our religion, when they shall see us who profess it excel others in piety and virtue. All other arguments can never prevail upon them so much as this one. But this would be of itself sufficient to demonstrate, that our religion is indeed the best religion professed in the world, when they who profess it are the best men in the world, not only *stedfast and unmoveable*, but *always abounding in the work of our Lord*.

And verily you have all the reason and encouragement imaginable to be so, forasmuch as you know (as the apostle here adds) that *your labour is not in vain in the Lord*, that is, whatsoever pains you are at, whatsoever care you take, whatsoever you do or suffer for the Lord, you may be confident it will be worth your while. It will not be in vain or to no purpose; for the Lord you serve is so good a Master, that he will be sure to reward and recompense you for all the service you ever did him: not as if you could merit or deserve anything from him, by doing that which he himself enables you to do for him, but because he is graciously pleased to

give eternal life to all who sincerely endeavour to serve him, not for their own, but for Christ Jesus' sake. And that is the reason why the apostle saith, that *your labour is not in vain in the Lord*, that is, in the Lord Christ; in whom, and in whom alone, God is pleased both to accept of what you do in this world, and to reward you for it in the next; where you shall live with him, and enjoy his love and favour, and all the good things you can desire for ever; where your minds shall be so perfectly enlightened, that you shall see him face to face, and your wills so perfectly sanctified, that all your inclinations shall rest in him, as their only centre, where you shall always live in perfect peace with him, yourselves, and one another; where you shall never know what care, or fear, or trouble mean, but shall live in perfect ease and quiet, in perfect joy and happiness, and in the highest honour and glory that creatures are capable of; where ye will not only keep company with the holy angels, but be made equal to them, and fellow-commoners with them in the pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore; where your bodies also shall be incorruptible and immortal, sound and healthful, quick and nimble, brisk and lively, and every way like to the glorious body of Christ himself. In short, where you shall have infinitely more glory, comfort, and felicity than you could ever deserve, yea, infinitely more than you can as yet imagine or desire.

And although God will confer all this upon you, only out of his infinite mercy in Jesus Christ, yet the more you now abound in serving him, the more he will then abound in his goodness and mercy to you. And hence it is, that as there are degrees of misery and torment among the damned in hell, so there will be degrees of glory and happiness among the saints in heaven; *for as one star differeth from another star in glory, so also*, saith the apostle, *is the resurrection of the dead*, 1 Cor. xv. 42. All shall shine as stars, but some shall be of one, others of another magnitude. All shall have as

much joy and bliss as they are capable of, but some shall be capable of more than others, even they who have had more love and zeal for God, and have done and suffered more for him. Their capacities will be more enlarged and how large soever they are, they will be all filled ; all shall be then happy, who are now sincerely holy ; but the more holy you now are, the more happy you shall then be ; the more care and pains you take here, the more shall be your joy and glory hereafter. For the more you love and honour God upon earth, the more shall you be beloved and honoured by him for evermore in heaven. *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

